BING

Summer
2015

No. 170

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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EDITORIAL

Greetings to all of my fellow ICC associates, and a hearty welcome to all of the new members receiving their first issue of BING! May each and every one of you find something that merits your interest and approval between these covers.

As outlined in the previous issue, we hope you took the plunge and purchased the new JSP label CD featuring songs from the very first weeks of Bing's transition from cut in guest to full time host of the Kraft Music Hall radio program in December 1935 to January 1936. This is for the most part previously unheard material, and we remain grateful to member John Newton for acquiring these rare transcription discs and his generosity in sharing them with us.

In the last issue, I offered my services to anyone wanting a restored example of Philco's famous 1201 radio/phonograph, which was heavily promoted on Bing's Philco Radio Time programs in 1946-47. I was pleased to be able to provide one to Bob Colonna, son of comedian Jerry Colonna, who was so closely associated with Bob Hope for so many years (and, of course, worked with Bing often too). Bob Colonna remembered his dad had a 1201 in his den when he was growing up. No doubt Jerry received the set as part of his compensation for appearing as guest on an episode of *Philco Radio Time* in December of 1946. It was an honor for me to bring back this memory from his childhood, and of his dad, back to Bob.

It seems connections to Bing come in the most unlikely places. Social media, such as Facebook, has opened many doors. Among my 'friends' on Facebook is Katie Cook, a name that probably doesn't mean anything to most of you. She is actually an English actress, best known in the US as host and correspondent with the Country Music Television network in the United States, where she currently hosts *CMT Insider* each week. Through a few messages, I learned that she is the daughter of Roger Cook, whose name I instantly recognized as being a prolific songwriter for decades. You can learn more about Roger here: http://www.rogercook.com/default.asp. Among the literally hundreds of songs he has composed is 'Where the Rainbow Ends', a song Bing recorded in 1968 during the 'Thoroughly Modern Bing' album sessions in New York. Katie was surprised to learn Bing cut that song, and even more surprised to learn he performed it on television (on The *Hollywood Palace*). I sent her a YouTube link to Bing's performance which she was thrilled to see and immediately forwarded on to her dad. Roger also wrote "Beautiful Memories" which Bing recorded in 1976.

And now over to Malcolm with more of what's in store in this issue.

Greg Van Beek **tvanbeek@execpc.com**

After the excitement of the PBS show and the new releases, it's been a fairly quiet time on the Crosby scene. The JSP CD of the early Kraft songs has been enthusiastically welcomed though and we are giving some thought to a further release of rare items.

This edition of the magazine has a variety of interesting articles including one from a 1981 edition of BINGANG which I found fascinating at the time and I thought it was appropriate to put into print again. Greg Van Beek unearths some mystery photos, Keith Parkinson takes a look at *Emperor Waltz* and Gord Atkinson remembers the unveiling of Bing's statue. Martin McQuade reports on a special travelling exhibition, Roger Schore has sent us a very interesting article about Bing from the *New York Times* in 1970 and Ken Crossland visits Jimmy Kennedy's hometown. John Newton has unearthed some special "Happy Birthday" records and there's plenty to report in *Bing on the Box*. Richard Baker does his best in a barren time for *Keeping Track*!

It looks inevitable that dues/subscriptions will have to rise for next year and Michael touches on this in his piece. Bob Grace also comes up with some interesting thoughts about the subject in our *Letters* section. Michael will also be reminding you about the forthcoming Leeds meeting in October and I hope to see many of you there. After 50 years, he has certainly earned a break and I do hope other members will do what the 23-year-old Michael Crampton did in 1966 and arrange meetings for Crosby followers in their locality. Get-togethers do provide a wonderful injection of Crosbyana.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

In my two previous reports I indicated that I was keeping our finances under scrutiny to ensure that we can maintain our service to members in the years ahead. I have looked back to see when we last raised our subscription to £15 and was surprised to learn that we last increased our fees 7 years ago in 2008! Those members that took the trouble to write with suggestions for protecting the club's future all indicated that a rise in fees was inevitable and that perhaps we should also increase our charges for the CDs we issue.

Following consultation with Wig, David and myself we concluded that it would not be unreasonable and not too big a burden on most members to increase our fees from 2016 onwards. The value for each country will be assessed and confirmed in time for inclusion in the winter 2015 issue of the magazine.

Members can be assured that the new fees will be kept to a minimum consistent with providing continuing good service to members.

The Leeds 50th anniversary dinner/meeting is attracting considerable interest and several members who have not attended in recent times will be coming along to share in our celebration of Bing's incomparable legacy. I do hope that any member who is able and well enough to attend will consider coming to what I know will be a joyous gathering of kindred spirits.

Malcolm has prepared a special programme for the day and each member attending will be presented with a special presentation pack. One regular member has suggested that this will be a sad occasion (since it is the last Leeds meeting) but I am determined that this will not be the case and to the contrary we should look back with delight and celebrate our good fortune in making it to the demi-centennial celebration.

The JSP KMH CD has proved popular with around 240 of our members, but surprisingly nearly 400 others have not shown interest in this unique souvenir of Bing's vocal art from 1935/6. This is a special release of songs which have not been heard for 80 years and I would urge all who have not bought a copy to do so before the CD goes out of circulation. Those buying the CD help club finances.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to:

IRELAND

Louis Mullen (Dundalk, Co Louth)

UNITED STATES

Alan Hall (Nashville, Tennessee), Simon Sotelo (Cincinnati, Ohio), Sharon Briscoe (Port Arthur, Texas), Chris Brochon (Dillwyn, Virginia), Wendy Keagy (New Canaan, Connecticut), Steven Lewis (Roeland Park, Kansas), Ann Linderman (Las Vegas, Nevada), James McCaffrey (Newbury Park, California), David Reese (Birmingham, Alabama), Jason Whiton (Mill Valley, California)

UNITED KINGDOM

Tom Jaques (Chippenham, Wiltshire), Alan McKay (Southsea, Hampshire).

DONATIONS

The ICC is very fortunate to have generous benefactors who consistently support the club with their financial contributions and we are delighted to acknowledge further very generous donations from

BRAZILIAN MEMBER

Renato Fallace

CANADIAN MEMBERS

Gord Atkinson, Barry Bannatyne, Barry Birch, Alan Matheson, Scott Payne, Britton Smith.

AMERICAN MEMBERS

Scott Ables, Cliff Brisbois, Thomas Chevrette, Joseph Clay, Nick Clooney, Theresa Cretella, Howard Crosby, Philip Crosland, Milton Cummings, David Currie, Stanley Diebel, Anthony DiFlorio, Laurence Doyle, Joseph Duncan, Ron Field, Arne Fogel, David Foe, William Fowler, Jeff Freeman, Rev. Jerome Heyman, John Holland, Michael Keiser, Marcie Kukla, Robert Larsson, Joyce Lundberg, Ralph Morris, Paul Murphy, Al O'Hagan, Edward Press, Michael Reilly, Ron Reichard, Dave Richards, Rev. Eugene Roberts, Judy Schmid, Ted Schoemberg, Richard Shoemaker, Michael Strada, Ernest Sutkowski, Greg Van Beek, Charles Van Riper, Charles Vincent, Ben Whitely, Judy Wysokowski,

UNITED KINGDOM, IRELAND AND EUROPE MEMBERS

Mr. S P Smith, Frank Startup, Jeremy Rose, Ken Shaw, Leslie Mills, Charles Wilkinson, Tom Mayer, Derek Perkins, Charles Campbell, Jonathan Cook, Anna Monaghan, Klaus Halm, Arthur Blood, Eddie McGinley, Brenda Sellers, Neil Robinson, Stan Woodford, Roy Chappell, Thomas Hirschmann, John Davis, Marc Matelart, Joyce McCullock, J N Wood, Joan Torey, Richard Cane, Colin Stewart, Robert Larkin, Margaret North, Trevor Wagstaff.

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Alan Matheson, Britton Smith, Michael Strada and Judy Wysokowski gave additional and very much appreciated gifts towards the JSP KMH release.

To all who give additional and generous gifts to the ICC we extend our sincere thanks.

DEATHS

Seamus Kelly (Barbourne, Worcestershire), **Jack Larman**, aged 89, (Hemel Hempstead), **Mr J Barnett** (Southsea, Hampshire), **Desmond Hellier** (West Hampstead, London).

It is always a sad duty to report the loss of any member but on this occasion it is particularly sad to report the death of four members who gave long and unstinting support to the club.

Seamus Kelly and Desmond Hellier were regular visitors to the Leeds meeting and only last year Desmond visited with his dear wife who sadly knew that she herself had only a few weeks to live after bringing Des to the meeting. Des was delighted to be present despite his severe Parkinson's affliction and both made the round trip between London and Leeds in just one day.

Seamus had suffered much pain in recent years and yet remained cheerful and appreciative of the good life he had had until his later years. He loved all kinds of music but Bing was special to him and he was deeply appreciative of the kind support that he received from his wife Christine.

Another death which we have not mentioned before was that of **Chick Wilson** of Greenwich, CT in the USA. Bill Piccone sent us a press cutting from March 2014 advising of Chick's passing. Many members used to obtain LPs and CDs from Chick's *Select Circles* business and several of us met him at the Hofstra gathering in 2002.

We extend our sincere condolences to the relatives and friends of the above, all of whom valued their association with the International Club Crosby.

BING CROSBY ON CD

This is my usual reminder that the following attractive CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50, Ireland and Europe £9.50 and the rest of the world £10.50. Unfortunately, increased postage costs are having a noticeable impact on letters going to destinations outside the UK. Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS - Vols. 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10

BING CROSBY in the Hall - Rare Live Recordings from KMH 1937 – 1946

BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall - Rare Original Survivors

BING CROSBY sings for the ARMED FORCES RADIO SERVICE

THE ROAD TO HONG KONG - SAY ONE FOR ME

BING CROSBY ENTERTAINS - FOR WOODBURY SOAP

BING CROSBY -Kraft Music Hall 1935 -1936

LEEDS 2015 (50th meeting) - Sunday October 4th

So finally we reach our demi-centennial, valedictory Leeds meeting and I do hope that the occasion will merit the attention of members particularly those who have not previously attended.

Members are travelling from the USA, Austria and The Netherlands and they will join our regulars to celebrate Bing's legacy. We will adhere to our usual successful programme and hopefully the tradition of holding an annual Bing meeting will continue beyond 2015 as others become inspired to take on the task of arranging a meeting that brings together like minded members who enjoy a day celebrating Bing's unparalleled career.

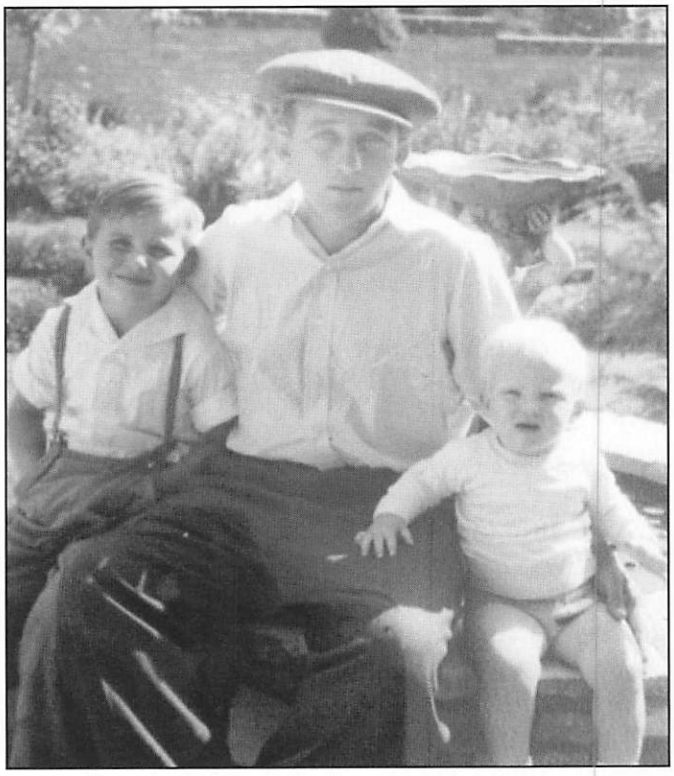
I look forward to greeting many on this special day.

Michael Crampton **mdcrampton@gmail.com**

RIP: Jack Crosby – Bing's oldest nephew.

Jack Crosby, art director for CBS and then ABC, died on June 14 in Henderson, Nevada. He was 88. Jack, who was Larry Crosby's first-born son, became the first art director of ABC's "General Hospital" in 1963, holding the title for 17 years. Prior to "General Hospital," he was a draftsman and then assistant art director for CBS during the early development of television in the 1950s. In 1961, he moved to ABC as an art director for game shows such as "Seven Keys." After retiring from ABC, Jack taught art direction at Loyola U. and Pepperdine U. He is survived by his wife Barbara, his children Michael, Cynthia, and James and four grandchildren.

Your editor and Michael Crampton had the great pleasure of meeting Jack's daughter Cynthia some years ago and we have passed our condolences to the family through her.



The young Jack Crosby (on left) with Bing and Gary Crosby.

The New Discography

A note from Jim Reilly

Regrettably it has become necessary to increase the cost of the discography due to increases in the printer's charges and in postage costs. As many of you will know the original charge was £13.50 plus p+p in the UK, whereas the actual cost per copy to print was £17.50 plus p+p. When I sent out copies of the discography I advised members that Wig Wiggins was financing the printing and that he had made a considerable loss in getting the discographies printed. I said that we would honour their orders at the original price quoted in BING but asked members if they would be kind enough to make a donation towards Wig's losses and most were more than happy to do so. I sincerely thank these members for their kindness and understanding.

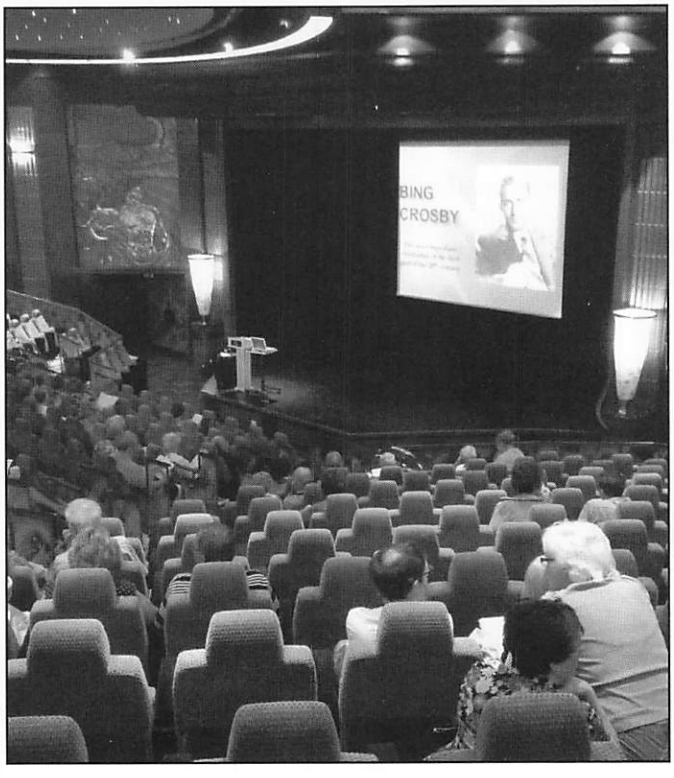
The new charges (postpaid) are as follows: - £21.50 - UK; £24.00 - Europe; $35.00 US dollars - America; Australia & New Zealand; A$50.00 Australian dollars. For UK and Europe please make cheques payable to Jim Reilly, America Mr F B Wiggins.

Jim Reilly

Queen Mary 2

In the Letters section of our last issue, Fred Wadsworth mentioned seeing a photo of Bing on this prestigious Cunard ocean liner and your editor had the opportunity to see it for himself in April. I had been asked to give five talks on a 16-night cruise from Fremantle in Australia to Cape Town in South Africa.

There are several displays showing the famous passengers carried by Cunard in years gone by and Mr. Crosby appears on three occasions. It seemed entirely appropriate therefore that one of my 45 minute presentations should be about Bing and the photo shows the 500-seater *Illuminations* Theatre being set up in readiness. I would think that the audience present during my talk was about 350 and I got a very warm reception. There were many Australians of senior citizen age on board and clearly they still have a strong regard for the Groaner. It was a very rewarding experience as they sang along to some of the old favourites.



Between The Liner Notes

No sooner had I got back from my cruise, I was interviewed by phone by Matthew Billy, producer and host of *BetweenTheLinerNotes.com*. Matthew wanted to talk about Bing's involvement with tape recorders in 1947. I told him all I knew and subsequently he has put together an excellent podcast on his web site which includes the late Jack Mullin talking about his discovery of the German Magnetophons. Well worth a listen. Look for "Magnetophons and Nazis".

Hot Club of Spokane CD

Hot Club of Spokane is an organization of musicians dedicated to the preservation of jazz, swing, and blues. They work and perform mostly in Spokane, WA where Bing grew up. They have produced a debut CD that celebrates the music of Bing, as well as two other jazz icons from Spokane, Al Rinker and Mildred Bailey. The CD features music from the repertoires of all three, plus the Rhythm Boys/Paul Whiteman Orchestra. They produced a short video describing the project. The club felt that there was a great need for this in Spokane because they found that when people were asked if they could name a Bing Crosby tune that was NOT a Christmas song, they couldn't!

To celebrate the CD's release, Hot Club of Spokane joined forces with *Nostalgia Magazine* to present a combination of live music and documentary film as a CD Release Party on May 2 at the Bing Crosby Theater in Spokane. Other artists taking part included Howard Crosby and Julia Rinker.

Kathryn and Mary at the Breakfast of Champions

In 1986, our president Kathryn Crosby moved The Crosby Pro-am golf tournament from California to the Bermuda Run Country Club near Winston-Salem, NC. During its 18 years in Winston-Salem, the tournament raised more than $18 million dollars for local and national charities. The Crosby Scholars Program began in 1992 by the organizers of The CROSBY, which was hosted and coordinated by the Sara Lee Corporation, with corporate sponsors from across the nation. Since 1996, the Program has been available to students in grades 6-12 attending public school in Forsyth County. The Program has graduated over 6,322 Crosby Scholars and awarded $4.5 million in Last Dollar Grant scholarships to students in Forsyth County.

On May 19, Kathryn and Mary Crosby attended the annual breakfast at the Bermuda Run Country Club honoring the program's volunteers, golf sponsors and teams, celebrities, donors and a select group of Crosby Scholar seniors. Kathryn addressed those present and received a very warm reception. Following the breakfast, the Crosby Scholars annual golf tournament took place at the Bermuda Run Country Club.

Kathryn at the Bermuda Run Country Club with Heather Angell, a professional golfer on the LPGA and LPGA Symetra Tour.

Phil Crosby Jr

Phil continues to keep very busy and on May 9 he sang at the famous Cicada Club at 617 South Olive St., Los Angeles. Singing with the Saguaro Sisters, they covered "Pistol Packin' Mama", "Pennies from Heaven" and "San Fernando Valley". On Memorial Day, he sang "Dinah" and "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby" at a local music fest. Phil has plans to perform a series of shows in October, including something at the Palm Springs theater, to raise money to buy a star on Palm Springs walk of fame for Bing.

In June, Phil was in England and his first stop was Royal Ascot and he got a security clearance for the Royal Enclosure! If his schedule permits, Phil would love to attend our Leeds meeting.

The Crosby-Clooney Story

The Waseca Art Center in Minnesota held a concert on May 16 entitled "Fancy Meeting You Here: The Crosby-Clooney Story." As the title suggests, the concert featured the music of Bing and Rosemary Clooney, performed by **Maud Hixson** and ICC stalwart **Arne Fogel**.

In the pre-show publicity, Maud Hixson said "This is a concert presentation with pianist Rick Carlson of the

music of Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney, and it tells the story of their partnership as one of the most popular singing teams of the mid-20th century. After appearing together in the film *White Christmas*, Crosby and Clooney went on to perform together frequently, releasing albums such as "Fancy Meeting You Here," from which the Art Center concert takes its name, and "That Travelin' Two-Beat."

Bing Crosby House

In our last issue I mentioned that the Crosby family had donated new images of Bing to Gonzaga in time for an event last December and we reproduced a couple. This led to some interesting correspondence as you will read in our Letters section. Bing Crosby House has a Facebook page and entries are made on a daily basis. Some more of the images from the Crosby family have appeared and we have pleasure in reproducing another one of these below. Bing clearly loved dogs throughout his life.

Satchmo SummerFest

This entertaining and educational weekend honoring New Orleans' native son, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong takes place on July 30 through August 2 in the French Quarter in New Orleans. The kickoff fundraiser/party is a special screening of *High Society* on Thursday, July 30th at Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carré

Top Tune of the Week

Roger Schore advised us that the late Cy Coleman's publishing company Notable Music selects an artist or song to salute every week and on June 24, Bing was highlighted using his version of "Witchcraft". Here's part of what was said:

> "In keeping with the Sinatra Centennial Celebration and to mark the beginning of summer, this week's Top Tune comes from the swingin' concept album, "Bing Sings The Sinatra Songbook", a collection of songs connected with Frank culled from Bing's personal archives. Bing Crosby's organically different approach on many of these Sinatra classics is on particular display with "Witchcraft" which he recorded in a shuffling ballpark-like style on April 3, 1958 in Palm Springs, California for his Ford Road Show radio broadcast."

Mystery Photographs

Greg Van Beek investigates some mystery photos

Having found series of twelve 8x10 photos on double weight card stock a few years back, which had originally been taken by photographer Bill Avery, I finally got around to seeking information on their origin. For that, I enlisted the help of my esteemed co-editor, Malcolm Macfarlane. Seeing the scans of the photos I e-mailed to him, he quickly identified that they must have been taken at one of the Westwood Marching and Chowder Club events from 1938. Having learned where they were taken, I endeavored to find out more about these private party events. I referred to copies of the books *Skylark: The Life and Times of Johnny Mercer* by Philip Furia, *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams-the Early Years, 1903-1940* by Gary Giddins, and *Bing Crosby: Day By Day* by Malcolm Macfarlane. Let's go back to 1938 as Gary Giddins sets the scene....

> The Westwood Marching and Chowder Club was spurred by the Crosbys' friendship with their neighbors in Toluca Lake, Herb Polesie, a radio producer, and his wife Mildred, whom everyone called Midge. Herb, who would soon produce the Kraft Music Hall and two of Bing's movies, was identified by a press release as the Marching and Chowder Club's president. The program for the first presentation, The Midgie Minstrels, credits him as "Interlocutor and ticket taker".
>
> The show was held in the Crosby home on April 16, 1938. John Mercer and Joe Venuti were the end men. As most of the wives had show-business experience, they performed along with their husbands; the couples included the Pat O'Briens, Johnny Burkes, Johnny Mercers, Larry Crosbys. Dave Butlers, Joe Venutis, Edmund Lowes, and Perry Botkins. Bing printed up the playbill for the performance patterned after an old-time minstrel show, with comical acts including James Monaco, The original Ragtime Jimmy. From Red lights to Kleig lights, Larry Crosby: The "IT" Boy in 'Oh My Garden', Perry (Union) and Virginia Botkin: Two folks and one guitar. When Bing's spot came on the bill near the end of the second act, next to his name in the program it says "Refreshments served gratis in lobby during recital". Blackface was confined chiefly to an end-men number by Venuti and Mercer, however Bing also appeared in blackface, with round white-rimmed glasses and a boater hat, very reminiscent of Eddie Cantor. The costumes were broad and gaudy, in true minstrel show fashion. A few were a bit risqué, including Bessie Burke's western themed costume that included cutouts in her chaps to display her buttocks.
>
> *(Extracted from Gary Giddins, Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams-the Early Years, 1903-1940, p459-465)*

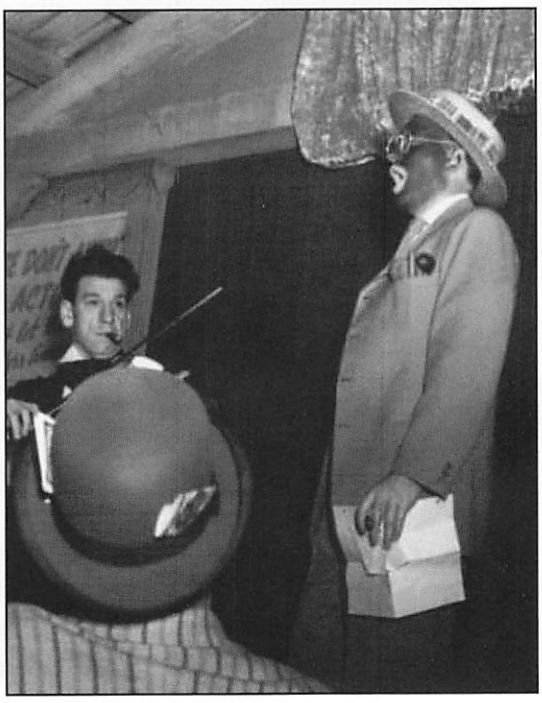
On June 25, starting at 7:00 p.m., Bing took part in another meeting of the Westwood Marching and Chowder Club, North Hollywood branch at his home. Other guests included Bette Davis, Shirley Ross, Wesley Ruggles, Edmund Lowe, and Skeets Gallagher. A tent was erected over the tennis court for the event which went on until dawn. All guests were asked to come in costume.

> The first performance aroused so much interest around Hollywood that a second show was scheduled for June 25, and along with most of the original performers, the cast included Andy Devine, Fred MacMurray, and Bill Frawley (who would go on to play Fred Mertz on television's *I Love Lucy).* A small band was also brought in that included Tommy Dorsey and Spike Jones. Mercer later fondly recalled these early Westwood Marching and Chowder Club shows. . . "It was all very spontaneous," Ginger recalled, "and as usual those are much more fun than when they get too well rehearsed." ...The Westwood minstrels printed up programs and had large glossy photographs taken of themselves performing and watching one another perform, drinks in hand. These shows brought Bob Hope and Crosby together, and there was even talk at one point of filming one of them for Paramount...The highlight of this second show, however, was a duet between Crosby and Mercer that Mercer had written as a blackface parody of the old ethnic vaudeville act "Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean." As "Lasses Mercer" and "Chitlins Crosby," he and Bing provided an "erudite analyseration of swing." Crosby had recently been given an honorary degree by Gonzaga University in his hometown of Spokane, Washington, and Mercer addresses him with mock deference as Crosby hums and scats...
>
> While other numbers in the show were merely in-circle fun, this duet "dazzled the audience" with its "smooth-running wit." Within a week, Crosby and Mercer made a recording, and it became one of the big hits of 1938, with *Time* magazine calling "Mr. Crosby and Mr. Mercer" the "summer's most amusing ditty." The recording rekindled Mercer's singing career, which had languished since he'd left Paul Whiteman.
>
> (*Skylark: The Life and Times of Johnny Mercer*, p106)

Other highlights included Bing and Fred MacMurray recreating the "Small Fry" number from the then yet-to-be-released *Sing You Sinners*. Bing, as "Gene Krupa Krosby", joining "Kenny Goodman Murray" and "Lionel Hampton Burke" on "Maggie Blues", and Bing as "Cracklins Crosby" rendering the Bert Williams classic "Nobody".

After this performance, the Westwood revelers retired until 1940, apparently due to the publicity the shows generated resulting in gate crashers. But thanks to photographs of the events, some from the ICC archives, we can revel in the jovial atmosphere of camaraderie again here.

Greg Van Beek



Songs of a Sunshine Salesman

One of the first editions of BINGANG your editor ever saw was that for October 1981. An article in it I have always remembered was by a Club Crosby member, the late Gordon Vogt, and, as you will read, it's still valid today.

This article belongs to a tradition of journalistic light academic writing that has never, to my knowledge, appeared in a Crosby Club magazine. What worries me is that some readers might be offended by it. This would not have occurred to me had there not been reaction to a very mild piece in a recent ICC journal about the changes in Bing's voice over the years. Whether the readers enjoy my piece will depend on whether they enjoy speculation, which is a form of play somewhat similar to reading detective novels.

During the coast-along fourth decade of his career Bing Crosby appeared regularly on other performers' TV shows where, as often as not, he joined the host in a medley of Crosby songs. The following snatch of conversation, recalled imperfectly from a distance of 15 years, took place in the middle of just such a medley with Dean Martin.

BC: " - But the songs I really liked best, Dean, were the ones that tried to express a sort of philosophy in their lyrics."

DM (drunkenly bumptious): "Oh. A philosophy. Is that right Bing? My my."

And the two went on to sing snippets of songs such as "Pocketful of Dreams" and "Swinging on a Star" that loosely fit the category of what Bing called "philosophical."

Most Crosbyphiles will know the kind of song our man had in mind; lightly up-tempo ditties of bluebirds and silver linings, happy vagabonds and drifting reveries; songs that fit so nicely his public character during the halcyon Crosby middle years.

Oh you can't have rain or sunshine that lasts forever
So the bluebirds and the blackbirds got together.

According to some statistics Bing's first "golden record" was "So the Bluebirds and the Blackbirds Got Together," a breezy little ballad with an unwieldy title in which the listener is advised to take the good luck of life with the bad. I don't know when Bluebirds and Blackbirds, Rain and Sunshine started to be used as pop emblems for good times and bad times. It's easy enough to come up with any number of songs from the twenties that employ them as such. Without popping a brain cell I can think of "Back in Your Own Backyard" ("The bird with feathers of blue" etc.), "April Showers," "Bye Bye Blackbird"...It would take an enthusiastic pop etymologist to trace the emblems back to their origins. In any case, by 1929 when Harry Barris and Billy Moll wrote "The Bluebirds and the Blackbirds" the philosophical song was a genre to itself.

Many of the Silver Lining songs of the time seem to me to have been associated with Ted Lewis or Al Jolson. But Maurice Chevalier was an immediate Paramount Pictures forerunner of Bing's film self, pitching his particular brand of Gallic joie de vivre into movie theatres years before Bing, at the same studio, picked up the threads of the tradition and Huck Finned it. Actually one of Bing's last recording dates with Whiteman included a Chevalier hit that -with a few dreamy inflections -could have been written for him "Livin' in the Sunlight, Lovin' in the Moonlight."

In 1930 Harry Barris took up the genre once again and moulded it to Bing's emerging personality and solo style, building on those dreamy inflections I mentioned above.

Castles may tumble that's fate after all
life's really funny that way.
No need to grumble, smile as they fall
Weren't you king for a day?

Although his style at the time was moody rather than dreamy, "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" was one of Bing's truly important early milestones. Like "I Surrender Dear" it was written for him by Harry Barris. But unlike that passionate song of throbbing repentance there were no immediate follow-ups to "Wrap Your Troubles." As a singer's first hits tell the public what to expect from him, this failure to follow up the song is interesting. Bing's early solo style lent itself better to torch songs such as "Just One More Chance" and "At Your Command" (Barris again) than to the cheery upbeat quality of the philosophical genre. Indeed in

Bing's first recording of "Wrap Your Troubles" he pitches the simple ideas across the plate with a fierce youthful urgency that didn't quite suit the proposition that troubles can be serenely dreamed away with the puff of a pipe. (For my taste the early version of the song is still preferable to the bland J. S. Trotter version, and it runs about even with the pleasing pipe and slippers Buddy Cole version.)

Despite the fact that Barris' philosophical songs didn't make the intimate connection of artist and material that Johnny Burke's lyrics were to forge for Bing some years later, the onetime Rhythm Boy deserves pride of precedent in this, little chronology. He was the first song writer to fashion material expressly for Bing (in some instances writing with Bing as well) and we can certainly credit him with prescience and a certain insight into Bing's nature as a public personality.

There is a postscript. In 1939, during the same month that he re-made "Wrap Your Troubles," Bing introduced another Harry Barris song in the genre. He could only have sung "Neighbours in the Sky" for old time's sake. The song's central conceit - that you should never be lonely because "the moon the sun the stars in heaven/are your neighbours in the sky" - hardly strikes one as natural (or even sane). But by this time Bing had already happened upon the writer who was suited to adapt the philosophical genre's view of life to his still emerging public personality.

Johnny Burke (right) with Jimmy Van Heusen.

John "the Poet" Burke became a solid part of Bing's career when he wrote the score for a 1936 movie that contained one of the best-loved philosophical songs that Bing was to introduce.

But no one appreciated skies that were always blue
And no one congratulated a moon that was always new
So it was planned that they would vanish now and then
And you must pay before you get them back again
That's what storms were made for,
And you shouldn't be afraid for
Every time it rains it rains-

"Pennies from Heaven," like many of Bing's film songs, was written to be sung to a child. The film of the some name initiated the movie association of Crosby and children that was to continue right through his last musical.

In all of the following Crosby movies a child or children are central to the plotline - at the very least to a musical number: *Pennies from Heaven; Sing You Sinners; East Side of Heaven; The Star Maker; If I Had My Way; The Birth of the Blues; Going My Way; The Bells of St. Mary's; Blue Skies; A Connecticut Yankee; Here Comes the Groom; Just for You; Little Boy Lost; High Society; Man on Fire; Robin and the Seven Hoods.* One could add *The Demon under the Bed*, a rare piece of dramatic acting for TV, which featured daughter Mary Frances.

Pennies from Heaven presented Bing for the first time in his favourite role; not so much an actor's role as a role for his public persona to take on; the troubadour, the strolling player, sauntering out into people's lives through the magical intercedence of movies, radio and records.

A real artist, Ted, a gentle pied piper. A dreamy itinerant who comes down the pike with his bag of bluebirds and silver linings, his battered hat and crooked cane, and with his musical philosophy, half spoken, half sung makes us serenely confident that everything's going to be all right.

That was Bing's tribute to Ted Lewis written as liner notes for the 1956 album "Songs I Wish I Had Sung". "When My Baby Smiles at Me," Bing's recorded tribute to Lewis, ends - as does his radio jazz band performance of the same year - with the very warm tag "Thanks Ted." It's a personal touch unusual for Bing. It's a fair guess that Lewis had meant a lot to young Harry Crosby of Spokane. I would guess further that the finished and loving written tribute describes Bing as he would like to be, or perhaps as he hoped he was. (Note in the same liner pieces Bing's description of "that strolling player" Nat Cole; intentionally or not a nice summation of Bing's approach to his work.)

In the late thirties Bing moved away from his role as an emotional singer of romantic songs to become a cool sympathetic observer of love and passion, and a buoyant softsell sunshine salesman. A list of songs recorded by Bing will show that the shift can be traced from the moment that John Burke came into Crosby's professional life and began angling the singer's songs in that direction.

Burke's second song in the philosophical vein was the cheery "Pocketful of Dreams", a title which, like

many of Burke's lyrics, apparently derived from a Crosbyism heard in conversation and used as inspiration for a lyric. In the early stages of Burke's association with the Crosby movie career he provided philosophical songs only when the subject matter of the film suggested them. But soon the songs were appearing even, say, in the "Road" pictures wherein Bing played semi-savoury characters with an eye for the main chance, the quick quip and the fast buck. The lead ruffian of these pictures was always on the hustle, yet even so there was often a spot where the plot stopped and he sang a Burke lyric about how money meant not a whit to him.

You think that money is everything
And yet it's anybody's spring. (*Road to Utopia*)
or
Ain't got a dime to my name,
What a terrible shame!
Ho Hum! Ho Ho Hum. (Road to Morocco)

I doubt that this incongruity really worried anyone, after all incongruity was the major comic device of the Road films. Nevertheless it's clear that the philosophical song had become the "Bingsong" and an audience would accept them in no matter what setting, particularly if Burke wrote them in the Crosby style.

Anybody who knows middle period Crosby at all should be able to pick out a Burke lyric on a hearing. Moon, Rainbows, Stars, Bluebirds, Meadows, Sunbeams and other vague emblems for Purity, Fancy, Harmony, Dreams, Imagination, or what have you, are placed - often to excess - in a fuzzy metaphorical setting, sometimes to suggest a specific approach to life, and sometimes simply to decorate a love song.

Welcome to my dream and how are you
Will you be here long, or just passing through?
Brush off that stardust, where have you been?
Don't tell me your Rainbow was late gettin' in.

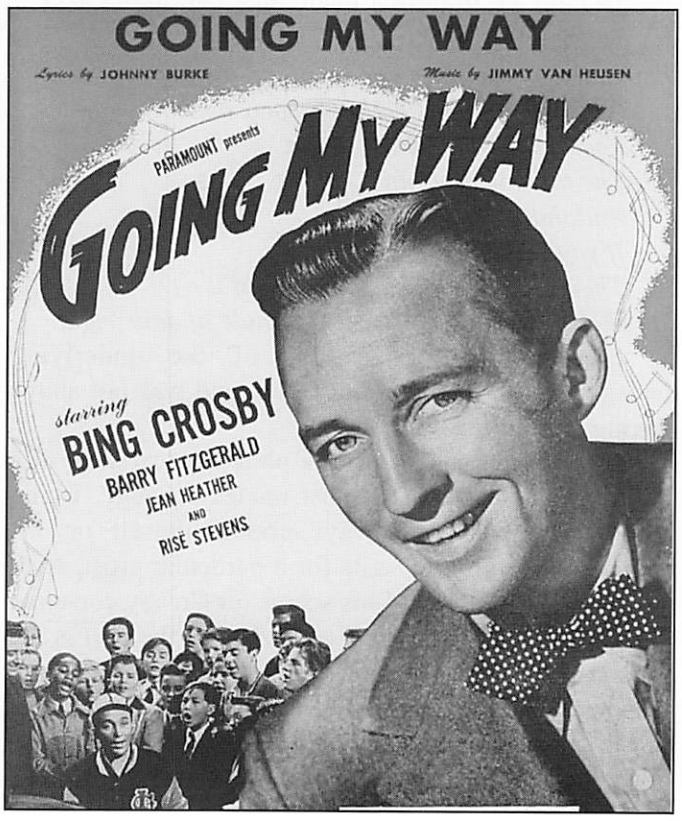
The above excerpt from "Welcome to My Dream" (*Road to Utopia*; 1944) demonstrates the other side of Burke's talent; a knack for using the vernacular or simple everyday phrases to impart a touch of offhandedness to emotional situations. ("What's New" is a classic example of this.) But in this case, mingled with those rainbows and that stardust, the effect of casualness is simply weird. It's even weirder if you place the nursery rhyme lyrics in the context of one of those Hays' office seduction scenes between two shady people with which *Road to Utopia*, in particular, abounded.

"Welcome to My Dream" is Burke in decline. A better example of his work is the pretty love song "April Played the Fiddle" (1940) in which the seasons are used to suggest the engagement of a lover's emotions, or the famous "Moonlight Becomes You" (1942) in which the singer seems to be holding his passion in check with gentle irony ("You're all dressed up to go dreaming - now don't tell me I'm wrong.")

The Johnny Burke period of Bing's career extends from 1936 to 1953. To a certain extent it can be divided into two sections; Pre O'Malley and Post O'Malley. The Pre O'Malley section is studded with little gems. Burke's early lyrics had a genuine pastel prettiness to them. At their best they were tailored beautifully to Bing's voice and expressed their philosophies simply and unpretentiously. Some of my particular favourites are "You Lucky People You," I Haven't Time to Be a Millionaire," and "Ain't Got a Dime to My Name." These aren't great songs, nor do they inspire great performances, but they are nice little ditties and very pleasant to hear or sing. These songs and several others articulated a side of Crosby that the singer truly enjoyed expressing. (Stroll on, stroll on gentle troubador/For you the paths will be strewn with roses white.)

Very few of the Post O'Malley lyrics have a charm and simplicity comparable to the best of Burke's earlier work. What happened was that old bugaboo of popular art; self-consciousness. For Leo McCarey's 1944 film Burke and Van Heusen were asked to come up with a song to represent Father O'Malley's personal philosophy. This was what Burke managed:

This road leads to Rainbowville
Going My Way?
Up ahead is Bluebird Hill
Going My Way?
Just pack a basket full of wishes,
And off you start with Sunday morning in your heart.
Round the bend you'll see a sign
Dreamer's Highway.
Happiness is down the line,
Going My Way?
The smiles you gather will look well on you
Oh, I hope you're going my way too.



Burke never wrote a worse lyric. Only Bing Crosby could have made those evasive pastel lyrics palatable onscreen. In his quiet, strangely private screen performance he even suggested for them a substance they simply don't have. But when Risé Stevens and the Mitchell Boys Choir gussy it up for the Concert Hall, forget it. If this writer had been the William Frawley song publisher of the film, he would have lit out after the first 16 at a dead run and without so much as a "Sorry Father."

But Burke had crossed the line. Now his conventional lyricism was nudged to carry messages weightier than convention allowed. Burke's lyrics had previously given scope for the playful irony of Crosby's style. Now, as the conventions hardened, his lyrics became tainted with moralism, and an aggressive cuteness that bordered on the pretentious. The jolly hucksterism of "You Lucky People You" became the arch preachiness of "Aren't You Glad You're You." There may have been coy lyrics before 1944, but Burke had never come up with anything as sticky as "Sunshine Cake" (1949).

Other lyricists wrote material for Bing in the period under consideration. Johnny Mercer - who wrote sporadically for him over the longest period of any songwriter (1936-75) - was also the most sophisticated lyricist to do so. Perhaps that's why he rarely came up with pure examples of the philosophical song. In 1944 he did write one with Harold Arlen; the delightful "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," which couched the message in southern fried dialect. The song might well have been intended as a gentle parody of the genre, but it offered the humour and vitality that Burke's lyrics had lost. The following is from the little known verse (sung, incidentally, by Bing in a lively duet with Bette Midler for the March 1977 Pasadena concert):

Gather round me everybody,
Gather round me while I preach some,
Feel a sermon comin' on me.
The topic will be sin
And that's what I'm 'agin!
If you wanna hear my story
Then settle back and just sit tight
While I start reviewin' the attitude of doin' right.

Mercer was well aware of the underlying pedagogical character of the genre, and was not above having a bit of fun with it.

By 1944 the inclusion of a philosophical song in a Crosby film score was almost noblesse oblige. Irving Berlin, for instance, always prided himself on his professional ability to write for a particular artist. And, sure enough, all three of his scores for Crosby contain a variant of the philosophical song. By far the best is the bittersweet children's song from *Blue Skies* "Getting Nowhere." That song can actually be read as a criticism of the characteristic Crosby screen personality. In *Blue Skies* the happy-go-lucky wanderer of Crosby's forties films has to learn responsibility for others because, in the words of the song, he's only "running around in circles," and stepping on others as he does so.

Softly as in an evening sunset
The light that gave you glory
Will take it all away.
(Oscar Hammerstein II)

After the death of John Burke, things are no longer so clear in the philosophical song department. Sammy Cahn took Burke's place as lyricist for James Van Heusen's music, and he dutifully turned out special material for Bing. But whereas Burke and Van Heusen had been Crosby's official song writers, our man had to share Cahn and Van Heusen with others, notably Frank Sinatra. In fact the two most popular "Bingsongs" that the team turned out -"High Hopes" and "Pocketful of Miracles" -were anomalous hits for Sinatra and written for him. Bing had to make do with "Say One for Me" and "Don't Be a Do-Badder," neither of them high spots in the history of Crosby songs.

"Do-Badder" from Bing's last musical, is a very curious thing. In the film *Robin and the Seven Hoods* it's sung by a comically sanctimonious hypocrite who turns out to be the biggest crook of all. Even out of context I can't take it as anything but a parody of the whole genre.

We're taught and taught and taught
To do the things we ought
But all the things we're taught
Can all add up to naught... etc.

Bing's performance underscores the jokey insider's element by interpolating Henry Higgins' famous "By George You've Got It!" (*My Fair Lady* was being shot at the Warner Brothers' lot simultaneously with *Robin*, and Bing, always an Anglophile, had become friendly with Crosby fan Wilfred Hyde White who was playing 'Pickering' in the film.)

By 1964, when *Robin* was made, the relationship of Bing's public personality to the upbeat philosophical song was - if not more complex - a bit uncertain. I see the turning point to be Harold Arlen and Ira Gershwin's distinguished score for *The Country Girl* (1954).

The score contained not only one very unlikely piece of Crosby material ("Dissertation on the State of Bliss") but a first rate version of the Crosby Troubadour song, "It's Mine, It's Yours." Except for the fact that it's relatively complex musically and lyrically, the latter song is straight down Johnny Burke's alley.

Try a cheerful song and a valentine
And a sense of humour that scores
And you're never in a spin, it's a bright world you're in
And it's mine and yours

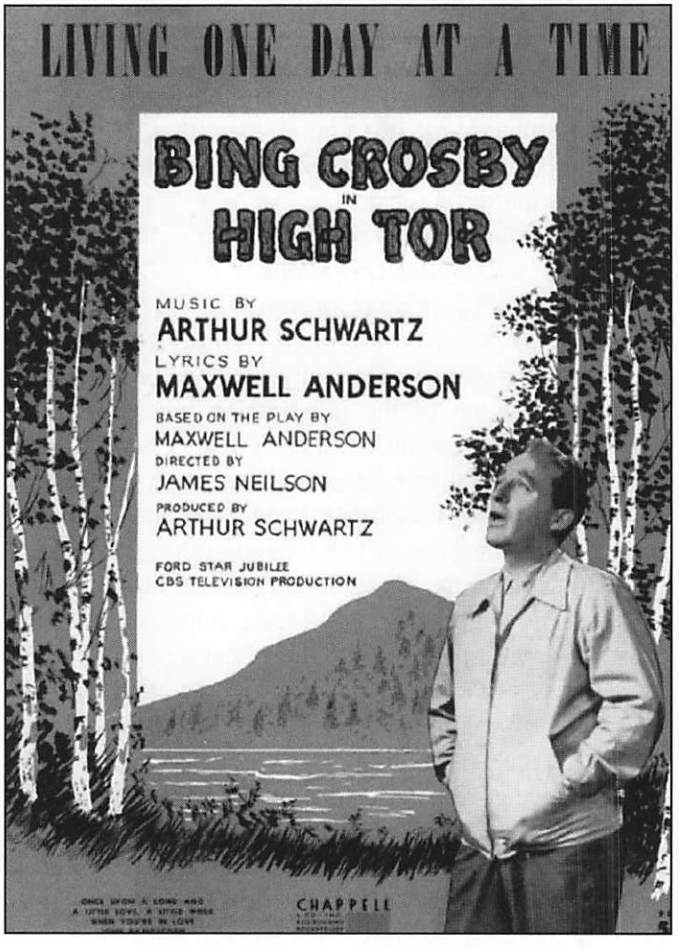
There must have been a conscious irony in placing this song in *The Country Girl*. How flimsy the advice of the lyric sounds when applied to the terrible human dilemma of Bing/Frank Elgin. In fact Bing Elgin is very adept at cheerful songs, valentines etc. He's adopted

such things to mask his fear and guilt and deny them even to himself. In *The Country Girl,* Bing - intentionally or not - acknowledged how thin sunshine veneers really can be.

After *The Country Girl* no troubadour songs were written for a Crosby film. There was however a fine one written by Arthur Schwartz and Maxwell Anderson for the TV musical drama *High Tor* (1955). Bing expressed a particular fondness for the song at the time. It's tempting to read it as a tribute to his own father to whom Bing always attributed his casual approach to daily living.

You can't cross a river till you come to it,
Can't get out of a tunnel when you're halfway through it.
That's what my Pap used to say,
And I try to live his way ....

As in *The Country Girl*, the song's conventional meaning is questioned by the context. Bing's character in the drama learns, through the pain of losing his phantom lover and almost losing his fiancée, that "Living One Day at a Time" is not enough for life.



If the troubadour song petered out in the fifties, the moralistic song continued appearing in Crosby films and on Crosby records (notably the three children's stories he recorded in 1957) - and on TV, The cartoon *Goldilocks* (1969) twisted the old tale to make some rather obvious points about prejudice - presumably racial - and Bing sang "Take a Longer Look" to illustrate them.

As Bing got more and more set in the role of elder statesman, a bent for moralizing came to the fore. Each episode of his TV sitcom, for instance, had the nature of a little cautionary tale ("Don't try to change your spouse"; Don't try to be something you're not" etc.) Whether because of changes in the popular music scene or because of changes in his personal life, Crosby's career after the middle fifties was to remain unfocussed, a bit uncertain in many ways. The only new development was the emergence of Bing as a popular moralist; and this was only an extension of an aspect of the entertainer that had always been there.

The man who sang "Sing a Song of Sunbeams" was still around. He opened his 1959 TV special with a spirited rendition of "I'm Looking at the World through Rose Coloured G1asses" with lyrics changed to alter the conventional love song to a general statement of philosophy. (The contrast was very telling when his guest Frank Sinatra followed Bing's song with "Willow Weep for Me.") Several of Bing's albums of the sixties suggest that he might have been working to keep the image of Mr. Upbeat perking. I am speaking of albums like "That Travelling Two Beat", "Thoroughly Modern Bing", "On the Happy Side" and the other dread singalong albums. The fact that many of these are among the worst efforts of his career suggest to me that he no longer invested any real creativity in that direction.

Crosby needed to find a way to connect his own changing sense of life to his art in order to rejuvenate his career and to continue to have faith in his singing. Instead he tried to do his part for the world by illustrating homilies while giving his fans what he felt they expected from him; a bouncy optimism that we know he didn't really believe in anymore.

I worry about the future. Not about my death, because I can't think of anything more I can accomplish within my sphere of limitations. But how are we really improving ourselves? Has mankind advanced in the last 4,000 years except in obvious fields like medicine and technology? Nope.... From somewhere back in my Jesuit education I remember the lines: "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey. Where wealth accumulates, and men decay. Very apposite for the world today."

(Interview with David Cobb. Canadian Magazine. May 1969)

This interview is a tad uncharacteristic. For whatever reason, Bing dropped his normally pat answers that, quite understandably, he tended to bring out for interviews. This is not a Crosby "performance." Even so he won't talk about himself.

Perhaps Bing's emotional reticence made it difficult for him to sing anything that might be construed as personal; he was an elaborately masked man. But the fact is that until his recovery from lung surgery in 1974, the singer's work rarely acknowledged real pain,

uncertainty or the process of aging. One could make a case for certain records such as "The River" "Two Shadows on the Sand," "Younger than Springtime," or "Once Upon a Long Ago." These had an emotional intensity that his mature work often lacked until the final three years of his recording career. But they are still the exception.

In a 1967 television interview, Bing referred to himself, with characteristic wryness as "Sear and Yellow" and said "I'd be timourous about singing anything serious today." He was really acknowledging the singing - the centerpiece of his life's work - was now a marginal activity for him. By refusing to allow his art to reflect himself he had lost confidence in his voice to express anything at all. And perhaps more seriously he denied to his long term fans the relevance of his new work.

Because his new recordings offered no new or evolving experience but merely tired reworkings of the old Crosby optimism, Bing stopped performing the most important function of a popular artist; to mirror the experience of his audience in some meaningful and diverting way. Who can blame his old fans for turning more and more to his old records in order to re-experience their and Crosby's youth rather than listening to his new and lesser efforts in the same old vein? Recently in leafing through some old copies of *The Crosby Collector* I was shocked to discover that Crosby's new records were being dismissed in a cavalier fashion by his fans as far back as 1957/58. Perhaps, then, his fans share the responsibility for his increasing alienation during these years.

If Bing tended to avoid the bittersweet vein that Sinatra, with his astonishing appetite for sentimental self-aggrandizement was to mine, there appeared in his recorded work after 1954 a handful of songs that made general statements of a sort that had not been there since the appearance of John Burke on the Crosby scene.

Perhaps social changes and changes in public outlook made it inevitable that Bing's work reflect some of the uncertainties of his society during the 50's and 60's. Even so there had always been sad or morbid songs; yet in the twenty year center of his career Bing almost never sang them.

The casual counterstrain to Bing's upbeat philosophical records begins, once again, with *The Country Girl.*

It's a dream and it's a plot
What you thought it was was not
But when arms begin to cling
And angels start to sing
What you have learned is -
Is you haven't learned a thing

Ira Gershwin and Harold Arlen's "Dissertation on the State of Bliss" is a cynical celebration of disillusioned love, even though, on record, the performances of Bing and Patty Andrews make it sound almost jolly. A 1957 record on the same subject made no compromises with the subject matter. "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" connects loss of hope and passion with the experience of aging in a very somber manner.

A few other records bring back the old upbeat themes in strange ways. The song "Far from Home" (1966) is not very different in content from "Back in Your Own Back Yard," say, or "And You'll Be Home." But whereas the effect of the 1966 recording is fatalistic, almost grim; 'a man must wander the earth in search of his star, - even though he knows in his heart the search is futile, as he will find that star not far from home."

On a 1968 Hollywood Palace programme Bing introduced - or rather extroduced - a new song that was reminiscent of "Over the Rainbow" in its yearning to escape into a world of the imagination. The song barely fits into the philosophical genre. But it belongs to this discussion nevertheless.

A very pretty song. I don't make too many records anymore. Not too much call for my kinda stuff. But I heard that song and I liked it. So I - so I just lost my head and made a record of it.

It's characteristic of Crosby to downplay his own work (and this in a year when he was to record 43 songs). But it was uncharacteristic of Bing to plug one of his records on television. And actually to comment on a song was unheard of! It's a good guess that "Where the Rainbow Ends" meant something to Bing.

Well what did it mean?

Oh if I could only go there
I would call the rain my friend
I could live my dreams forever
And journey where the rainbow ends.

The singer expresses the wish to leave the real world for a pretty Eden of the imagination where all is in harmony. We're in Johnny Burke's territory here. But the use of the subjunctive tells us that the singer's wish will never be fulfilled. Bluebird Hill and Rainbowville are no longer attainable even in fancy, going no-matter-who's-way, down no matter what Dreamer's Highway.

Seen in conjunction with two other songs Bing chose to record in the leanest of his lean recording years, the song is even more interesting. "How Green Was My Valley" (from 1966, the flip side of "Far from Home") tells us of the pollution - real or metaphorical - of the singer's once green world, and, by extension, the loss of his memories and his hopes.

The other record, one of the strangest Crosby records ever cut and one of the least appealing, is in 1967. In this song the singer is removed from the mean, polluted world, not by the wings of fancy, but by technology, and not with joy, but with cynical contempt.

It's safer there in outer space on lunar missions
And far removed from little men with big ambitions
The braver men are those who live in these conditions
Not out in the blue with a much clearer view with

What you can do with the world.

Note that the inversion of the title in the final line carries with it a rude suggestion. Was this in the lyric as written? In the context of Bing's recording career this song - despite the ambiguously upbeat semi-rock arrangement - is almost nihilistic.

Finally on "Have a Nice Day" - from the 1972 Count. Basie album - the loss of hope or even of the possibility of refuge in Rainbowville, has left the singer defeated and resigned. Mercer fashioned for Bing a lyric of sour middle-aged resignation sung, apparently, by a commuter on his way to work. The repeated phrase "Have a nice day" echoes the old 'Be Positive' stuff, but sarcastically, sulkily.

Any cat who can sign an 'X'
Is pickin' up his unemployment checks.
But who's complainin'?
What's more it's rainin'
Sigh in and 'have a nice day.'

Now we will pause here while I assure all that I'm not suggesting any simple equation between Crosby the singer and Crosby the man. Nevertheless the sudden - if sporadic - appearance of songs that cut against the Crosby optimism in the last half of his career is very striking. Even so mildly despairing a song as "How Green Was My Valley" would have been unheard of back in his hit parade years.

Because Bing refused to marshal into his recording material his negative feelings, or at least some of his more mature reflections on life and love, the occasional disillusioned record made guerrilla warfare on the more conventional bulk of his work. The aggressive optimism of "Step to the Rear" is undercut by "What Do We Do with the World"; the 1972 "Have a Nice Day" undercuts next year's "It's Not Where You Start". Yet neither the positive nor the negative poles carry any real conviction.

The period of the late/middle sixties and the early seventies were barren ones for Crosby. So much of the work is tired or uninspired or marginal. All the more surprising that his last three years as a recording artist should be as rich and productive as any other period in his career. As a glance at his work of 1975-1977 will show, the philosophical song was very much a part of these years, even though their role was not as straightforward as before. The big breakthrough came in 1975 with Bing's first record for Ken Barnes. Characteristically that breakthrough was muted and stubbornly ambiguous. A man whose only comfortable posture is irony has trouble making statements.

When things went wrong I'd fake a smile
But that's my style, 'cause I've been around
And having been around I've found
That's what life is all about.

A very peculiar statement. What does it mean? Faking a smile is what life is all about? Or getting around is what life is all about? Whether the ambiguity is studied or simply due to imprecise writing, faking a smile was certainly what much of Bing's career was about - certainly with regard to the philosophical genre.

The album *That's What Life Is All About* contained two old songs of the genre; a simple troubadour song ("Breezing Along with the Breeze") and a famous moralistic song ("The Best Things in Life Are Free"). It also contained a number of new songs in the same vein - two of which included the fact of old age in the theme ("No Time at All" and "The Good Old Times"). As a whole the album is very interesting in the light of this discussion. I won't take the space to discuss it now, beyond suggesting that it freed Bing at last to assimilate his private self once again into his work and to go beyond anything he'd ever done before on record in exploring that fascinating creature called Crosby.

There is one last anomaly I want to point out. Bing's final LP, the flawed masterpiece *Seasons*, on which Bing sang as well as he ever did but with an aching vulnerability in his voice, opens with the much mellowed upbeat statement of the title song ("What a Beautiful World"), and closes with the bleakest song he ever recorded. His superb and chilling rendering of "Hang Me Oh Hang Me" on the "How the West Was Won" set is the only rival to my mind. Further that song has interesting parallels to "Yesterday When I Was Young."

Bing's performance of "Yesterday When I Was Young" is so fine and so assured that one may not realize at first just how uncharacteristic of the singer it is.

Perhaps he thought of this dark evocation of a selfish mis-used life at the end of its rope as a cautionary tale. But it seems to me that he was acknowledging at last the many faces of human experience that exist under even such a sunny exterior as Bing Crosby's.

I've listed all of the songs that Bing recorded which I feel fall under the category "philosophical." I call them philosophical because they do not simply express a momentary feeling or sensation (being in love, nostalgia, feeling good), but relate their feelings to a general statement about life. Some of them state their philosophies outright. Others merely imply them. With these last I've occasionally used a little interpretive licence.

In, say, "Got the Moon in My Pocket" the singer is expressing an immediate sensation of joy and tells us why. It's a particular situation, he tells us of; not a general one.

In "Start the Day Right," on the other hand, the singer is not necessarily expressing an immediate feeling or situation, but suggesting a general attitude towards getting up and meeting the new day. The song and lyrics are an exemplum for the listener, suggesting positive ways to behave.

In "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" the singer is clearly a particular guy talking to a particular gal and saying "accept me as I am." There is no moral implied about, say, love being better than diamond rings.

In "More I Cannot Wish You" there is likewise a particular person singing to another, but, in this case there is a moral because the singer tells his listener, in effect, that "love is more important than wealth."

Pop music is not the place to look for profundity. Its function is not to seek out or explore anything difficult, but to offer comfort or distraction by way of formulas based on accepted beliefs, and to enliven these things by novelty in the presentation. Not surprisingly, most popular philosophical songs fall into one or two categories. In the case of Bing's output I've divided his songs in the genre into the following categories:

A. BE POSITIVE

In songs of this category the listener is assured that good things eventually come to those who wait with their sunny sides up, looking for silver linings and bluebirds. Sometimes the songs suggest that if you stay happy you will attract happiness ("Meet the Sun Halfway," "Smile Right Back at the Sun"). Sometimes they acknowledge the existence of pain and unhappiness but suggest a number of painless ways of dealing with these unpleasant things. You can, for instance, wait out the bad times secure in the knowledge that sunshine follows rain ("Till the Clouds Roll By," "Still the Bluebird Sings"); you can be philosophical about bad times, remembering that you must take the good with the bad ("Pennies from Heaven," "Hang Your Heart on a Hickory Limb"); you can escape into your imagination ("Wrap Your Troubles," "Pretending"); you can keep your chin up and keep plugging away no matter what, and eventually you'll come through ("Never Be Afraid," "I Whistle a Happy Tune"). The "keep your chin up" group comes close to straight moralizing and is often meant to be sung to children. "Swinging on a Star" and "If You Stub Your Toe on the Moon" come under this category. Some 'Be Positive' songs talk specifically about the pain and pleasure of love ("Laugh and Call It Love," "I've Got to Fall in Love Again").

B. BE HAPPY WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT:

These songs have the same intention as the 'Be Positive' songs; to encourage the listener to count the blessings of his life no matter how poor and troubled it may seem. These ideas dominate the category:

1) The simple things in life are the best ("I've Got Plenty to Be Thankful For," "It's Anybody's Spring"); 2) The poor man is free of the cares of the rich man ("Ain't Got a Dime to My Name," "I Got Plenty of Nothin'"); 3) The vagabond's life is the freest of all ("Someplace on Anywhere Road," "My Heart Is a Hobo"); 4) Love or companionship makes up for poverty ("We're a Couple of Soldiers," "What Do I Care It's Home"); 5) The joys of simple country life surpass anything you can find travelling the great world. ("Home Sweet Home," "My Own Bit of Land"). (Judging from Bing's discography this particular grouping would seem to be an obsession of the immediately post war years.)

C. LIFE ISN'T ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE:

This category is not really a category at all. Nevertheless it is extremely important to our discussion. For under this one arbitrary heading I've gathered all the "philosophical" songs that provide a negative counterstrain to the optimism of A and B. A few of these songs may have opposite intentions to the bulk of songs in the discography (e.g. "Blues in the Night" which opposes, say, "Hang Your Heart on a Hickory Limb" by asserting that love really ain't "no bargain so abstain"). Others may carry with them only a hint of an opposing philosophy within what would otherwise lean towards the sunshine side. In some cases, as in "Children," or in "Sunrise Sunset" the balance between positive and negative is precarious.

Gordon Vogt

(Editor: Gordon [A.] Vogt was born on 17 September 1947 and educated at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, where he received an M.A. in English in 1973. Vogt became interested in theatre while at Queen's and remained active in local theatre in Kingston upon his graduation. In 1977, he began work as a freelance journalist for CBC radio and later became a theatre critic for the CBC arts program "Stereo Morning". Vogt subsequently sang as a vocalist with the Rainbow Gardens Jazz Orchestra. He died on 10 July 1985 of a brain tumour at the young age of 37.)

Holiday for a Strings Virtuoso

Martin McQuade has news of an important celebration.

Tuesday, June 9 2015 was proclaimed Les Paul Day in New York. Exactly one hundred years ago the guitar virtuoso and wizard was born. A whole day of celebrations was arranged and coordinated with The Les Paul Foundation. Concerts were held at The Hard Rock, the site of Bing Crosby's 1931 landmark NY Paramount engagement, and at The Iridium nightclub, where in later years Paul performed with his trio. In addition, The Les Paul Big Sound Experience was launched on 44th and Broadway, in the heart of Times Square. This is a 53 foot interactive state-of-the-art mobile touring exhibit that subsequently embarked on a national tour, described by The Foundation as "an opportunity to experience 1.000 square feet of music exploration, sound and technology explorations and hands-on interactive entertainment where visitors will even be able to mix and share as they discover Les Paul."

Naturally, Les' association with Bing was well documented in text and photos. One display focused on Les' persistence in getting to know his favorite singer.

Meeting Bing

Bing Crosby's weekly NBC radio show was the top show in America, and 29 years old Les wanted to be on it. He didn't know Bing, but left New York determined to meet him in Hollywood. After becoming a staff musician at NBC, Les noticed Bing's habit of going into a tiny room for a few minutes of quiet before the show. One day, Les had his trio in that room rehearsing a hot number when Bing walked in. Bing hired all of them on the spot. ***Being associated with Bing was a major step up.***

Another section recognized the boost which Bing gave to Les' technological innovations.

Overdubbing Tracks on Magnetic Tape

Bing Crosby was the biggest recording star of his day. Les often accompanied Bing in the studio with Cal Gooden on rhythm and Clint Norquist on bass. When Les was 33, Bing Crosby gave him one of the first Ampex tape recorders. Les added an extra playback lead and achieved the same multi-track effect on tape that he had created on disc.

The Listening Station shared select tracks from Les' discography, among them "It's Been a Long, Long Time"' with this caption. *The song struck a chord with returning servicemen and their families newly reunited after World War II. The song hit number one on the Billboard Hot 100 on December 8, 1945. As the featured guitarist, Les gained a lot of attention from this recording.*

This is a splendidly comprehensive traveling tribute to a giant of the recording industry, a maestro internationally revered by both fans of classic American pop and rock enthusiasts. The entire itinerary may be found at http://www.les-paul.com/les-paul-big-sound-experience-tour-dates/

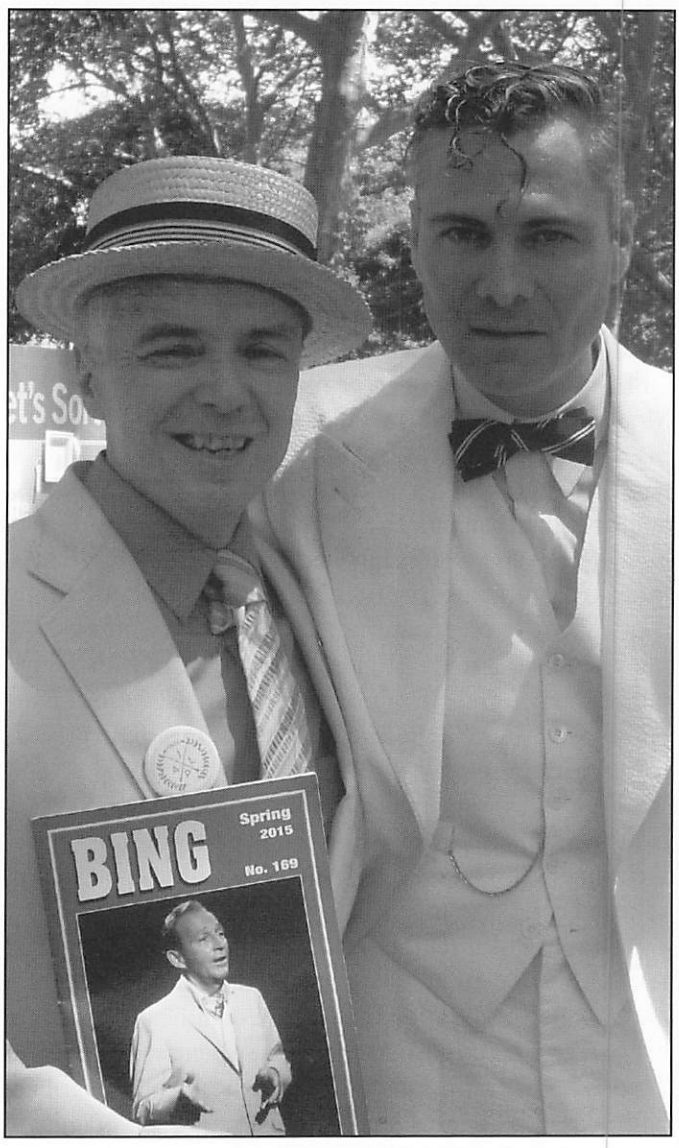
Les was also an unusually kind man. When Kathryn Crosby was frequently appearing in New York, she would ask me to call Les to invite him to her shows. Unfortunately, her performances mostly were on Monday nights and Les would be unable to attend due to his Iridium engagements. Upon the mention of Bing's name, Les would become flooded with his memories and anecdotes about Bing. This was astonishing. He barely knew me, yet he allowed me to be an ear-witness to an extraordinary relationship. As we became more acquainted, he received from my collection some of the more elusive of his broadcast recordings with Bing, which triggered further recollections. Once he participated by telephone on a live radio program with Kathryn and myself. In 2008, during what would be our final conversation, Les permitted me to tape record an extensive interview which he intended for publication - a chronicle of his abiding friendship with the man who so influenced his career.

During this three-hour session Les spoke with detail revealing his plan to meet -and eventually accompany - his boyhood inspiration; and he meticulously described his professional and personal time spent with Crosby. This wealth of information was carefully transcribed with the goal of fashioning a narrative of a unique relationship about which Les so dearly wanted the world to know. Sadly, Les died before anything further could be done. At last, excerpts from the interview will be featured in several monthly installments of *Guitar Player* Magazine www.guitarplayer.com beginning with the July, 2015 issue.

****

A Midsummer Day's Dream

Mid -June in New York offered another nostalgic event -the 10th anniversary of The Jazz Age Lawn Party on Governors' Island, hosted by Michael Arenella and his Dreamland Orchestra. The celebration perfectly captured the mood, ambience and fashion of the late twenties-early thirties, and there were many Paul Whiteman-inspired arrangements wafting through the air, such as "I'm Coming Virginia," enabling one to imagine that Bing was suddenly to appear on the bandstand. In fact, Michael conjures the ease and delight of the early Bing as he croons while leading the band. Michael once again shared Bing's impact upon his style. **"Bing's baritone reassured me that being a baritone was nothing to be ashamed of. In a world of hi-strung tenors, he was a voice of encouragement for me."**



Martin (left) with host Michael Arenella.

The Dreamland Orchestra closely resembles the make-up of the bands with which Bing cut his musical teeth, with a full complement of trumpet, clarinet, saxophone, banjo, ukulele, guitar and piano. Michael, who also plays a mean cornet and trombone, incorporates "The Dreamland Follies" within his aggregation. "Dancing in the Dark" was a Follies standout last August, a fastidiously recreated rendition of Bing's Brunswick recording, echoing every note of Victor Young's arrangement. Gregory Moore, who heads The Follies, told me that it took a tremendous effort to track down Young's original chart. Incidentally, this 1931 Brunswick side is heard in the background of a recent episode of HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*, one of the sponsors of the Lawn Party. This year, "Paddlin' Madelin' Home" was a brand new Follies highlight. In addition, café society piano-man Peter Mintun entertained the scores of flappers and sheiks. Peter's many interpretations of Crosby classics may be found on You Tube.

Michael has just released a new CD, *Just in Time* which contains Roaring Twenties style performances of classic tunes, several of which were recorded by Bing: "Too Marvelous for Words," "When Day Is Done," "What a Little Moonlight Can Do" and "I'll See You in My Dreams." The magic returns to Governors' Island the weekend of August 15/16. For more information visit www.dreamlandorchestra.com

Martin McQuade

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runswick has released 15 records by Crosby in the past eighteen months, each one bringing sensational sales to runswick dealers. Bing Crosby broadcasts regularly over the Columbia network. He is now making an extensive tour f the Publix Theatres throughout the country, and is en route to California where he will be starred in a feature length icture. Tie up with this great star when he appears at your local theatre.
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TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Garland Atkins, 1801 Westbrook Circle, Gastonia, North Carolina 28052, USA. Telephone: (704) 396-6658. e-mail: gatkins4@aol.com

For sale: Bing's original money clip given to him by Dixie Lee. In 14 carat gold with zinc engravings of their four sons. If interested please contact Mr. Atkins.

John Bassett, "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RZ, UK

CAN YOU HELP?

Does any member have knowledge of a company or individual who can make a double-sided 7-inch acetate disc from a cassette tape recording? Having tried a few professional audio companies without success, I am now reaching desperation!

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com - website: www.fesfilms.com/)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD. They also have thousands of Public Domain films and TV shows. Films are sold on DVD-R and Mpeg2 video file formats.

Mike Kaptanis, 64 Kingsley Drive, Yonkers, NY10710, USA (Tel: 914-779-9728, email: mmgkaptan@aol.com)

"Have been collecting records a long time and, in downsizing my collection, am offering 50 free Crosby 12" LPs. Can pick up the discs personally or I can deliver to anyone living within the confines of New York City, and suburbs."

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619 email: raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Free lists available by email. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing and other easy listening artists' CDs, please contact Ray.

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 - email: abcsoc@dodo.com)

The Society has been running since 1977 having originally been formed by the late Bob Machliss. Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights.

The film night on April 28 featured *Just for You* supported by a documentary about Fred Astaire. On June 23, *Little Boy Lost* was shown together with the Leslie Caron film *Lili*. Further film nights are planned for August 25, October 27 and December 8. The venue is the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains a mass of information plus some excellent audio and video vaults which contain much rare material.

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Daily entries are made and the number of people who have "liked" the site has dropped from 281,000 to 274,038 following an exercise by Facebook for the removal of inactive accounts.

Bing Crosby House

Fairly new to Facebook. Go to:
www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby-House/296302530555116
Rare items from Gonzaga's collection are frequently displayed and it's well worth a look. Alex Westby, a senior majoring in History with a certification in teaching Social Studies at the secondary level, has recently taken over responsibilty for posting on the page

Bing Crosby on Twitter

See www.twitter.com/Bingconstantly for this site which has lots of useful tweets. It has grown to 6305 followers now.
@Bing_Crosby is still the place to go for Bing Crosby Inc. There are 3301 followers as we go to press.

BING magazine

We are very proud of this site which contains a considerable amount of reference material and Lionel Pairpoint's marvellous radio book, Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography" and Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" can all be accessed. Your editor's book "Bing Crosby - Day by Day" is on the site too. All of these books are being updated as new information arises. Since the site was redesigned some years ago by Howard Crossland, it has been visited no less than 30,951 times.

See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

A Bing Crosby Discography

Created by our member, J. Richard Baker (known as Jarbie), this excellent site can be found at:

http://tinyurl.com/BingCrosbyDiscography

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:

http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/

Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so

Jon Oye's Blog

ICC stalwart Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive

David Lobosco runs this blog which has news and many stories about Bing at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

Tony Meade's blog

Tony has an interesting and varied site at http://bingsphotos.blogspot.co.uk/

John Marshall's Compilations

John's excellent PowerPoint presentations "A Night At The Movies" and "The Written Word" can be found by typing *internet archive john c marshall bing-the written word* into your search engine. Also he has added his very interesting 12-hour, 12-volume Footloose Follies series to the Internet and this can be found by searching against *John C. Marshall Footloose Follies.* This series has many clips of Bing and many other greats from the 30s, 40s and 50s.

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com, website: www.flias.com/)

A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

International Al Jolson Society, c/o Sandy Gerloff, 419 Glenwood Drive, Douglassville, PA 19518, USA (email: Flufftwo@dejazzd.com -website: www.jolson.org)

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Nat King Cole International Fan Club, c/o Roy Holmes, 18 Rutland Drive, Morden, Surrey SM4 5QH, UK (phone: 020-8648-8858, website: www.highstreets.co.uk/kcc/index.shtml)

King Cole Comments is the club's newsletter and this is issued three times each year. For a free copy, please send a SAE to Roy Holmes.

Sinatra Music Society -Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-899771, www.sinatramusicsociety.com/).

A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world. Ken Barnes, who made those great albums with Bing in the 70s, is the Honorary President.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 003531 8212418).

Meetings take place at 8:00 pm, second Monday of every month in the Tara Towers Hotel, Dublin 4.

Have you seen

Memory Lane

the acclaimed quarterly magazine for lovers of 1920s, 1930s and 1940s music? Although the emphasis is on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, Memory Lane also covers the American bands, jazz, variety, etc. Al Bowlly - Britain's favourite vocalist is regularly featured.

Memory Lane is quality printed, fully illustrated and nicely presented with articles, CD reviews, Readers Letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A "must" for 78 RPM collectors.

Memory Lane also issues CDs mainly of British dance bands and vocalists, DVDs, runs guided walks in central London identifying the locations where the bands used to play, etc. and hosts nostalgic events in London.

Initial annual subscription only £10 (UK) or £15 (overseas) for readers of BING magazine. (Normal price £15 - UK, £20 - overseas.) Please send cheque payable to "Memory Lane" to **Memory Lane, P O Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England.**

Or visit our web site - www.memorylane.org.uk where you can pay on-line.

Books 'n' Bing

1. Hope: Entertainer of the Century

By Richard Zoglin, Hardcover: 576 pages, Publisher: Simon & Schuster (November 4, 2014), ISBN-10: 1439140278, ISBN-13: 978-1439140277, $19.23 from Amazon

In our last issue, your Editor considered this book in the light of the press coverage seen in the UK. Perry Huntoon now provides a more balanced view.

I just finished reading Richard Zoglin's biography, "Hope: Entertainer of the Century" and noted your comments in BING No. 169 referring to Bob's purported quote that "I never liked Bing" and the fact that you were rather "soured" by its unquestioned appearance in the book. I also note that reviews in the highly reputable New York Times, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal make no reference to this while the (London) Express review is headlined "Bob Hope 'hated Bing Crosby and was a love cheat' new biography reveals." Quite a contrast from one side of the Pond to the other.

I suspect that most Crosby fans, like me, are also Bob Hope fans. From the fact that they were of the

exact same generation and were so intertwined with the Road pictures, cameos, constant jokes about each other and the golfing, it is only natural. That one quote in Zoglin's 486 page biography is largely undermined by all the other references to Crosby. Yes, it might have been better if Zoglin had questioned the statement more closely, but it doesn't detract from the overall work. It seems to me that the abominable "Bing Crosby -The Hollow Man" made almost the same point. Then there is the quote from writer Stephan Schochet in which Hope allegedly said "the greatest acting performance he ever gave was smiling when he served as Master of Ceremonies while Bing won his Academy Award for playing a priest in *Going My Way.*"

A publicity photo from *Road to Bali.*

As we all know, when Bing died suddenly, Bob was so stricken that he had to cancel a show he had scheduled for that night. Also, although not documented in this biography, I had read that in Bob's last days, he listened to a lot of Crosby records to pass the time. All of which indicates that, while the two were not socially together much and had quite different personalities, it is quite a stretch to say Bob hated or detested Bing.

Zoglin could have written quite the sensational exposé detailing Bob's extramarital affairs, his parsimony and egomania, but he keeps that in perspective. While we are exposed to the warts, the overall story of a great entertainer shines through. Nothing on TV ever thrilled me more than watching Bob's annual specials of entertaining the troops overseas. The Road pictures still hold up as great comedy. Zoglet's subtitle, "Entertainer of the Century" is not hyperbole. Bob deserves this biography and ICC members should enjoy it as immensely as I did.

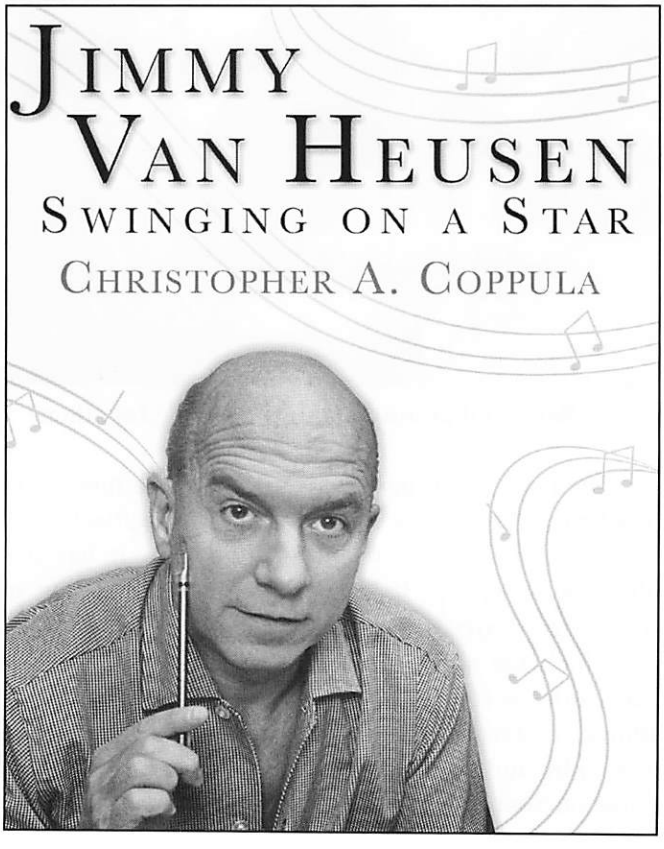
Perry Huntoon

2. Jimmy Van Heusen: Swinging on a Star

By Christopher A. Coppula, Paperback: 545 pages, Publisher: Twin Creek Books (December 16, 2014), ISBN-10: 0984534512, ISBN-13: 978-0984534517, $24.95 from Amazon

Judy Schmid takes a look at this new book about one of Bing's most important songwriters.

Published by a wing of the great Van Heusen music empire run by great-nephew Brook Babcock and based in Nashville, *Jimmy Van Heusen Swinging on a Star* is an interesting read about a highly under-rated songwriter. The book itself, written by Babcock family friend, attorney and first-time author Christopher A. Coppula, suffers from a number of issues to be mentioned later, but as a collection of notes from an unpublished biography on Van Heusen by journalist Robert de Roos and from reams of notes written by Van Heusen himself, it fills in many gaps to our collective knowledge of Van Heusen.



Edward Chester Babcock, not the son of immigrants and whose family tree roots itself squarely in the days of the early colonies, has never been given a proper treatment by authors and filmmakers. Perhaps it's his seemingly nonchalant approach to songwriting, and to living, that turned contemporary story-tellers away from his music and toward more 'exciting' stories, such as those of the Gershwins, Cole Porter, and even Johnny Mercer. But Babcock, who changed his name in his late teens, on paper if not legally, to James or Jimmy Van Heusen, was a prolific writer of complex and beautiful tunes. His greatest successes came in his pairing with lyricist Johnny Burke, when the team wrote for Bing Crosby's Paramount films, and in his pairing with lyricist Sammy Cahn, when that team wrote for Frank Sinatra films and themed albums. The book explores Van Heusen's early years in Syracuse, NY, to his foray into New York City and then Hollywood, and doesn't shirk away from sharing the stories of Van Heusen's many 'hobbies' - including being a test pilot during World War II - and his love of women and alcohol. From that standpoint, the book is a quick read and Van Heusen's story should be shared. It's to be noted that this book was compiled during the same time that the recent documentary on Van Heusen was prepared for airing on PBS.

Bing and Jimmy look over a song together.

The book itself, however, suffers from a number of problems. At $25, it's very pricey for a paperback book that has fewer than 30 foot-or endnotes. It has one photo per chapter. It has no chronological listing of songs, their lyricists, publication dates, and films/shows for which the songs were initially composed. It has very little in reference to naming and detailing other source materials, only mentioning the unfinished biography and compiled memoir notes in a three-page 'Note on Sources and Acknowledgements', in which the author confesses he had very little opportunity to validate the stories he compiled. A photo on page 159 is NOT of Celeste Holm with Van Heusen; a list of Crosby songs in "King of Jazz" is incorrect. Other errors - whether in grammar, in over-use of clichés and commonly accepted (but still incorrect) word forms ("impacted" comes to mind immediately), in punctuation, in numerical references (decimal points and trailing zeroes are to be used in tabulations, not narratives), geographic directions (as a native Syracusan, I can attest that Camden Village is northeast of the city, not northwest), misspelled words and names (it's Monaco, not Manaco; it's palette, not palate, etc.), and in musical notation. It would have been better to use musical symbols for 'flat' and 'major/minor' than spell out the words using the font used in the book's printing.

There are other things Crosby fans might find irritating, such as the worn-out repetition of Bing being 'cold', but there is a huge Crosby presence in the life of Van Heusen, and it's certainly included here. Nitpickers among the fans might argue with dates of films and song recordings, and while I noticed some errors, I chose not to focus on those but tried to read the book as someone who was interested in a great American composer of popular song. As a Crosby fan, I'd have to disagree with the author when he stated his opinion that Crosby couldn't swing up-tempo songs in the 1950s, but again, that's his opinion versus mine.

The author shows no references to having contacted Gary Giddins or the Crosby family. I myself know of a massive quantity of correspondence that the Crosby family has retained that would have been another powerful story in how important the Crosby-Van Heusen relationship was. Rather than merely telling the reader that the Sinatra-Van Heusen relationship was important because of how Van Heusen was available to Frank in some low times, additional information would've pointed out how important Bing was to Van Heusen during the composer's own low times. Sadly, those connections were never made and thus the story is lacking.

The book is printed in a bulky, double-spaced font more suited to readers with vision problems than the casual reader. At over 500 pages, a proper font could've reduced the book to 250, plus my wished-for song list. In addition, THERE IS NO INDEX, which is painful.

In summary, Jimmy Van Heusen should be a composer as well-known as Gershwin, Berlin, Porter, Arlen and others, but sadly he is not. His music was often stunningly poignant. The book itself, however, is a disappointment for the reasons I've mentioned. A good editor might have found and corrected errors; a fact-checker might have fine-tuned some of the mistakes. Musicians or other authors who know how to review a book might have made a powerful reference on the book's cover. A vanity publication, sadly, may not

give Jimmy Van Heusen the contemporary respect he so richly deserves, but perhaps it's a start.

Judy Schmid

The Definitive Bing Crosby Discography

Members have warmly welcomed the new discography and Anton Garcia-Fernandez of Martin, Tennessee published an article about it on the Village Bandstand web site in May. He has kindly given us permission to reproduce it here.

Not only was **Bing Crosby** one of the most important vocalists of the twentieth century-he was also one of the most prolific, entering the studio repeatedly pretty much every year between his first known recording session in 1926 and his last in 1977. And yet, despite the sheer amount of his output, very few of Crosby's albums and single releases remain unavailable on CD, the proliferation of all kinds of reissues causing inevitable, and often irritating, duplication of titles. This makes a CD-specific discography necessary for the dedicated and casual Crosby fan alike, a fact that **Frontis B. "Wig" Wiggins**, of Arlington, Virginia, and his friend **Jim Reilly**, of Portsmouth, England, realized many years ago, when they published their book *Bing Crosby's Commercial Recordings from 78s to CDs* in 2001. Now, over a decade later, they have joined forces again to revise, update, and beautify that pioneering discography. The result, ***The Definitive Bing Crosby Discography from 78s to CDs***, is a very attractive book that contains a wealth of information about Der Bingle's recording sessions with an eye to simplifying anyone's hunting for CD reissues of Crosby material from any period of his long, successful career.

The book is very well put together, carefully researched, and generously illustrated mostly with color pictures, and its intelligent organization, with all sorts of interesting indexes, makes it a joy to browse through. This is definitely not the kind of discography that only lists titles, dates, locations, backing orchestras, and catalog numbers; it also includes brief essays that discuss various aspects of Crosby's career, thus making the book appealing also to casual fans that may be interested in learning a little about each phase of Crosby's recorded legacy in addition to perusing a complete listing of masters, alternate takes, unreleased and non-commercial recordings, and even titles that contain studio errors, like his famous fluff on a rejected take of "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams." *The Vintage Bandstand* has recently had the chance to interview Mr. Wiggins, who currently serves as the American and Canadian representative of the International Club Crosby, on the subject of the book, which is indispensable for both Crosby and popular music aficionados. As he mentions in the interview, a supplement to this discography, detailing all of Crosby's radio recordings that have been officially authorized for release on CD by Bing Crosby Enterprises, is in the works, and we are eagerly awaiting it. Before proceeding to the interview, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the authors for their wholehearted dedication to this project, which makes the lives of Crosby fans and collectors a great deal easier.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez (for *The Vintage Bandstand*): When and how did the idea occur to you to begin such a daunting project as this Bing Crosby discography?

Mr. Wiggins: When the CD era began, I started annotating my personal discography each time a song title was reissued on CD to help organize my own collection. After a while my friend Jim Reilly, of England, and I decided it would be useful to publish a first version of a CD-oriented discography for others, which was entitled *Bing Crosby's Commercial Recordings-From 78s to CDs*. It was issued in 2001 and was very popular but has long been out of print. About four years ago we concluded that so many additional CD reissues had appeared that a revised and updated edition was desirable. We then spent at least three years exchanging telephone calls and e-mails to prepare this new edition for publication.

TVB: What was the rationale that you and Mr. Reilly followed as you began the project?

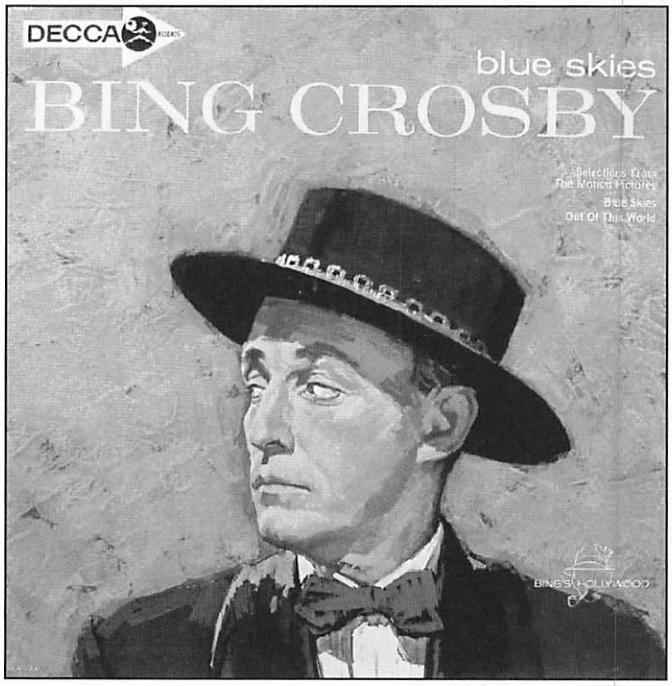
Mr. Wiggins: As there was no other current printed discography available that indicated which of Bing's recordings had been reissued on CD, and this was the manner by which most collectors were acquiring them, we thought a new edition of our original book would be appealing and useful to Crosby fans.

TVB: What is new and different about your discography when compared to other Crosby discographies available online and in book form?

Mr. Wiggins: The main differences are the following: (1) A listing of the original commercial release of each title on 78s, 45s, LPs, or CDs; (2) a listing of a recommended CD version of each title that has been released on CD; (3) a listing of the names of composers, orchestra leaders, and vocal accompanists; (4) the addition of sixty unnumbered illustration and information pages, most of them in color; (5) an exclusive new section entitled "Unreleased Studio Recordings"; and (6) multiple indexes to facilitate identification of entries and to make use easier.

TVB: This is an invaluable reference work for serious Crosby fans, but what is the appeal of the book for the more casual fan?

Mr. Wiggins: The addition of the sixty extra pages giving information about various aspects of Bing's overall career, including his films and radio broadcasts, for example, as well as lists of his "Gold Records," "Top Hits," and "Bing's Hollywood Songs," among other general information.



One of the Bing's Hollywood series of LPs.

TVB: What aspects of this project were the most difficult to tackle for you and Mr. Reilly?

Mr. Wiggins: The creation and verification of the original commercial release of each song, wherever in the world. This new and unique feature was completed in consultation with other leading Crosby collectors over a number of years.

TVB: As you mentioned, the book is profusely illustrated with color pictures and contains some very interesting indexes and even lists of unreleased Crosby recordings and alternate takes. How many years did you and Mr. Reilly spend working on this project?

Mr. Wiggins: Jim Reilly and I have worked together since the early 1990s on recordings by Bing. For at least a decade I was consultant to MCA / Universal Music in Los Angeles, compiling and annotating Bing Crosby collections for reissue on CD, and Jim played the same role for the same company in London. This led to our three-to four-year project to publish our first discography in 2001, and then another three-year effort to update our new version.

TVB: What, if anything, have you left intentionally out of the book?

Mr. Wiggins: We decided it was best not to include Bing's extensive number of so-called "radio recordings," as this would have made the project too large and almost unending. As stated in the "Introduction" to this edition, we plan to produce a supplement to be entitled *Special Radio Recordings*. This will include all radio recordings authorized for release on CD by Bing Crosby Enterprises, such as the Mosaic CD box set of Bing's many songs recorded with Buddy Cole, along with other such compilations.

TVB: It seems that the book is selling rather well. What kind of responses have you received so far from Crosby collectors and fans?

Mr. Wiggins: Thus far, only telephone calls and brief notes of thanks praising the overall quality and content of our book have been received. Some have also expressed appreciation for the "Recommended CD" column, for helping to guide their collecting while avoiding excessive duplication. We have been disappointed, however, at the complete lack of any internet comments to date.

TVB: And finally, if you had to recommend three Bing Crosby releases to someone who is interested in getting acquainted with Crosby's phenomenal body of work, which ones would you choose? Thanks again to you and Mr. Reilly for your wonderful work on this new Crosby discography!

Mr. Wiggins: For the newer Crosby fan, or for one who is just starting out, I would recommend the following CDs: ***Bing's Gold Records*** (MCA / Universal MCAD-11719), *Merry Christmas*, which was retitled ***White Christmas*** (MCA / Universal MCAD-31143), and ***A Centennial Collection of Bing Crosby's Decca Recordings*** (MCA / Universal MCAD-88-113222). A single alternative to these would be the four-CD box set, ***Bing-His Legendary Years*** (MCA / Universal MCAD4-10887).

Further information

For more information about this new Bing Crosby discography (its price is US$35, postpaid via Priority Mail), as well as for ordering the book, you can contact Mr. Wiggins at the following mailing address: 5608 North 34th Street, Arlington, Virginia 22207, U.S.A. Mr. Wiggins will also take orders by phone (703-241-5608) and e-mail (wigbing2012 (at) gmail.com). The discography is also announced in the International Club Crosby website, where you can find information about how to order it if you live in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez

(Editor: Well done, Anton. The book is a limited edition so don't delay if you want a copy. Contact Wig Wiggins at the address above (phone: [703]-241-5608) or Jim Reilly at 27 Beaulieu Rd., North End, Portsmouth, Hampshire P02 ODN, UK (phone: 02392 666677) to obtain your copy.

Prices: USA US$35 (postpaid), Canada US$35 (in U. S. funds) (postpaid), and in the UK £21.50 (postpaid). Mainland Europe & Ireland £24 (postpaid). Australian and New Zealand members should order their copies from David Currington paying A$50 (postpaid).

Make cheques payable to F. B. Wiggins, or in the UK and Europe, to Jim Reilly.)

Bing's Birthday Records

John Newton discusses records associated with Bing's natal day.

Those familiar with Bing Crosby birthday records would probably be referring to Bing's March, 1947, recording of "Happy Birthday" (with "Auld Lang Syne" mx. L-4398-A) that appeared on English Brunswick at a later date -and also appeared in the U.S. as a special one-sided Decca with blank areas on the label on which to inscribe "To" and "From" as a birthday presentation, almost like a greeting card. On this recording, Bing sings the neutral "... to you, dear" within the lyrics. Also, during the same recording session, Bing recorded another version, an "open version" where Bing remains silent for about 3 seconds where "to you, dear" was sung in the previous version, suggesting that the name of the person celebrating their birthday could be sung during the brief silence. This second recording (mx. L-4399-A) exists as a Decca test.

Beyond these, however, Bing was involved in several other "Birthday Records" during a slightly earlier period. The earliest of these, at least of which I'm aware, dates from April, 1939. The recording itself probably dates from Bing's recording sessions of April 3rd or April 5th, although a late March date is also possible. The reason for this specific recording was of a personal nature for the head and founder of American Decca, Jack Kapp. Mr. Kapp, whose relationship with Bing went back to the very beginnings of Bing's Brunswick recording career, wanted something very special to give to his young daughter on her upcoming 7th birthday. And, for the head of a major record company, what could be better than a special record, made by the company's top recording star?

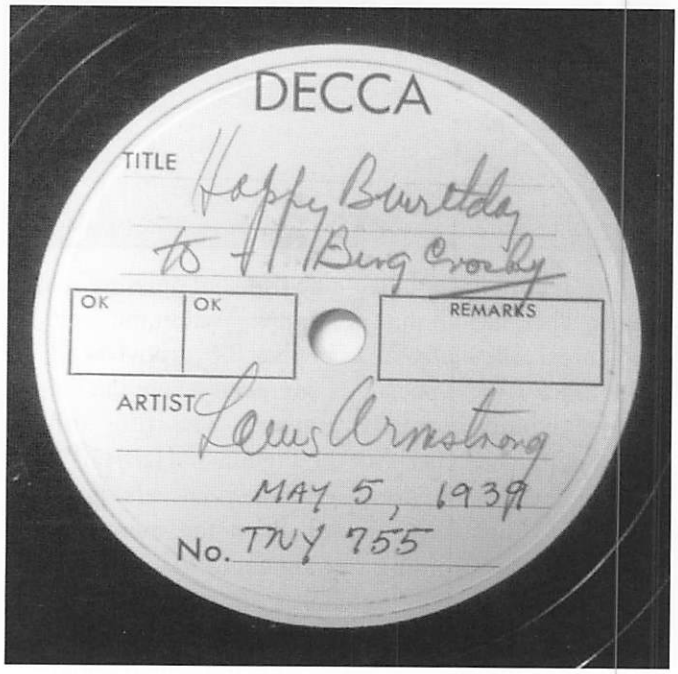
DECCA
TRADE MARK REGISTERED
MANUFACTURED IN U.S.A. · BY DECCA RECORDS, INC.
THE GIRL WITH THE PIGTAILS IN HER HAIR
(Sammy Cahn-Saul Chaplin)
Sung by
BING CROSBY
for Myra Joan Kapp
Seven years old April 19, 1939

The record itself, a one-sided special pressing with a special label, has no matrix number. Within the record's "dead area", the blank area between the grooves and the label, "Jack Kapp Special" is engraved where the matrix number would normally appear. The title of the recording is "The Girl with the Pigtails in Her Hair", but it is much different from the commercial version of the song that Bing would record about ten months later. Bing starts the recording singing about Mama and Papa Kapp before reaching the chorus, the melody of which and much of the lyrics remain as written, while Bing weaves in some special lyrics, directed to and about the birthday girl, Jack Kapp's 7-year-old daughter, Myra Joan Kapp. After Bing's chorus, he and Jack Kapp have some dialogue, questioning and affirming that Myra is "a good little girl". Bing closes the recording with another quick chorus. It is interesting to note that Decca chief Kapp wanted to get this record just right, and to that end had two copies pressed -each with different label type, so he could decide which looked "just right".

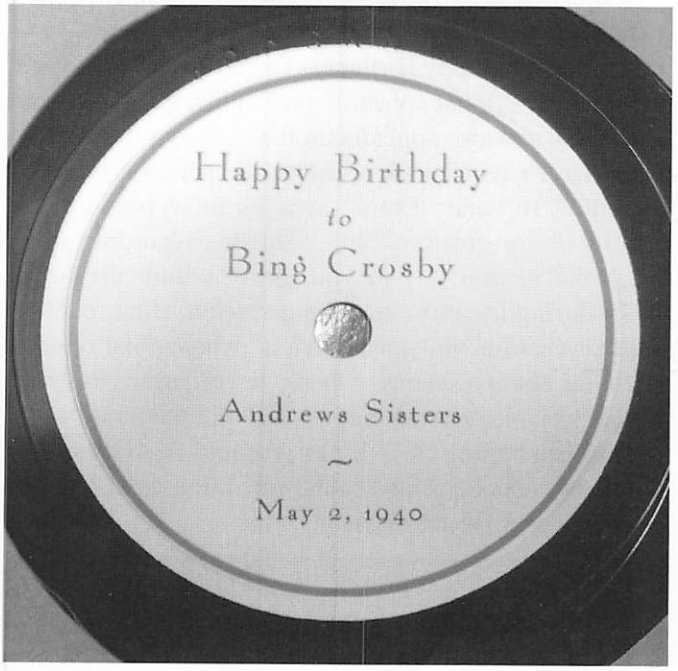
Bing's next connection with a birthday record came only a couple of weeks later, not as a performer but as the recipient of a special record himself. There was a long and special affinity between Bing and Louis Armstrong, and this relationship is very evident in the special recording that Armstrong made as a birthday greeting to Bing in 1939. The original Decca pressing (with Decca test label and matrix number in Decca's special "TNY' -Test New York -series), has a hand-written date of May 5, 1939, but a later Decca copy is dated May 2nd, perhaps because this was Bing's official birth date at the time. In any case, the recording was made for Bing's 1939 birthday.

The Armstrong recording begins with an orchestra playing a very slow, almost dirge-like, version of "Happy Birthday". This is followed by a greeting from Louis Armstrong, ". . . this is old Satchelmouth getting

ready to wish the happy birthday to one of the finest young gentlemen in show business today, Papa Bing Crosby, that's what I calls him". Armstrong goes on to send wishes to "Papa Bing, the Madam Bing, and all the little Bingies". After his personal greeting, Louis sings "Happy Birthday" to Bing in the same slow tempo that began the recording. As soon as Armstrong's slow vocal is finished, the orchestra jumps the tempo to a very fast jazz pace, and Louis shouts, "Ah, swing it for Papa Bing there, boys!", after which Armstrong sings "Happy Birthday" again in fast jazz style, finally ending the recording with a prolonged "Yeah!"



One year later, another special recording was made in Decca's New York studios to send birthday greetings to Bing for 1940. This time the special record was made by The Andrews Sisters, and again the record received a special matrix number in Decca's "TNY" series. On this occasion, however, the Decca staff also made a special label for Bing's birthday record. The recording itself begins with a rhythmic Andrews Sisters close harmony style vocal of "Happy Birthday" to Bing, after which Patti Andrews speaks for the trio, and then says "Laverne and Maxene and I join all the boys here at Decca in wishing you the happiest birthday you ever had." She goes on to say that, "... as long as you're having birthdays, you'll always be King Bing to all of us." The sisters then sing more birthday greetings, singing "... all the cats and the long-hairs too, sing Happy Birthday, Mr. Bing, to you." and they also refer to Bing as "Papa Crosby".

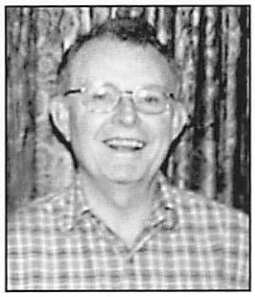


On a similar, yet separate subject, Bing could also send -and perhaps receive -birthday greetings through another familiar medium, radio. In late March, 1936, a birthday celebration was held for Paul Whiteman's 46th birthday at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City. Greetings and entertainment were performed by the Paul Whiteman Alumni Association, a group of former Whiteman associates, musicians and performers, with the proceedings broadcast over NBC at a very late hour (ending at 2:30 in the morning). Bing, as Vice President of the Association, was "cut in" to the broadcast from Hollywood, where he sang "Thanks a Million", again with special lyrics thanking Paul Whiteman, similar to that which Bing sang during Whiteman's final Kraft broadcast the previous December. But, we're off the subject of "records" now. . .

Were there other later (or earlier) "birthday records" to or from Bing? "New things" still tend to turn up from time to time, and perhaps we will soon see more.

John Newton

Celluloid Crosby



The Emperor Waltz (1948) ranks in my top ten favourites of the forty or so films Bing made for Paramount. My reasons are the glorious Technicolor photography which does justice to the scenery of Canada's Jasper National Park -standing in for the Austrian Alps -and the tuneful songs. I can watch Bing's six minute rendition of "The Friendly Mountains" over and over. My enthusiasm for the film was not shared by the critics or the film's director, Billy Wilder. It was regarded as his first flop. He went on record as saying, "1 never want to see it again." Of the twenty plus films which Wilder directed, *The Emperor Waltz* does seem to pale against such acknowledged classics as *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Lost Weekend* (1945), *Sunset Blvd (1950)* and *Some Like it Hot* (1959). Yet five years before *The Emperor Waltz* made it to the big screen Wilder was anxious to film the story. The story's setting took him back to his youth

In 1943 it was Wilder's idea to make a movie of Molnar's "Olympia" and he approached Paramount with a view to the studio buying the rights from M-G-M. Wilder was contracted to Paramount as both screen writer and director but had yet to establish a track record in the latter category. The deal went through and immediately discussions took place to cast Greta Garbo in the role of Countess Johanna. Paramount was cool to the idea of Garbo. As for the male lead, the studio wanted to utilise its contracted player Ray Milland in the role which would eventually be taken by Bing. The female lead was pencilled in for Ingrid Bergman. Bergman was under contract to David O. Selznick and Wilder met with the producer in March of 1944. Selznick was agreeable to releasing Bergman but suggested that Joan Fontaine would be ideal for the part. Could some ulterior motive be detected here? Fontaine received $75,000 for her contribution to *The Emperor Waltz.* Selznick received $225,000. Wilder lunched with Fontaine the following month and he initially considered that she would not be right for the part.

With Milland still the intended male lead Wilder set to with the film's producer Charles Brackett to find a substitute for Fontaine. Brackett was co-writing the film's screenplay with Wilder and both attended a series of meetings to find the ideal Countess Johanna. Ann

Bing sings "The Friendly Mountains"

Sheridan and Irene Dunne were both considered without a decision being made. Meanwhile the screenplay was taking shape and the original idea of the film's protagonist being a man touring Austria-Hungary with a performing dog at the beginning of the twentieth century became that of Virgil Smith, travelling phonograph salesman. Brackett and Wilder saw Bing as ideal for the part of what was now turning into a musical. They put the idea to Bing in October, 1945. He was enthusiastic. Later in the month, with Garbo still a possible Johanna, Greta and Billy went to watch Bing in *The Bells of St. Mary's*. It was then that Garbo said no. But Wilder was inspired to try for a teaming of Bing with his co-star in *Bells*. He lunched with Ingrid Bergman at the beginning of November. She said she had no wish to make another film with Bing so soon after their teaming in *The Bells of St. Mary's*. And so Joan Fontaine gained the female lead by default.

When Joan Fontaine was interviewed for a Billy Wilder biography she had a few less than happy memories to share. She stated:

> Crosby wasn't very courteous to me. I remember he didn't stand up when we were introduced. I thought "Poor Lamour." This man didn't have respect. Maybe he treated her better. There was never the usual co-star rapport. I never enjoyed his songs after working with him. I was a star at that time, but he treated me like he'd never heard of me. I should have brought my sarong. Crosby's personality was what you might have expected from the Emperor Francis Joseph. He was the emperor of Paramount. Bing Crosby had the power over Billy Wilder. Paramount would certainly have replaced Mr. Wilder, and Mr. Brackett, too, any day, if Crosby had wanted it. It wasn't that he had anything against Mr. Wilder. He just didn't pay much attention to him. He told me once that he had some trouble understanding his funny accent."

From the above you might reach the conclusion that Fontaine was a Wilder supporter. Some time after the above comments she was interviewed by Brian McFarlane and dismissed Wilder's directorial talent. She told McFarlane, "He was just a guy who'd played the piano in a whorehouse in Vienna, wasn't he?" She was referring to Wilder's early life before he relocated in Hollywood.

Wilder did support Fontaine's assessment of the actor-director relationship on set, however. He told his biographer, Charlotte Chandler:

> "Crosby was directing himself and he had writers working on what he said and sometimes he didn't pay attention to the Wilder-Brackett words, or even the words of his own writers. He said it as he felt it at the moment. Bing Crosby operated for himself, not for the group or the film. He was a big star, the biggest, and he thought he knew what was good for him. He did. He sensed what his audience expected, and he knew how to deliver that. The picture didn't come out what I wanted, but that wasn't Crosby's fault. It was mine. I was looking back to my childhood in Austria -waltzes, Tyrolean hats, cream puffs."

Look again at Wilder's comments. He is not critical of Bing's intervention. He understands the underlying reasons. He is telling us Bing knew best.

We have an insight into the Paramount operation in the 1940s thanks to the publication by Columbia University Press of the edited diaries of screenwriter Charles Brackett It is necessary to put his views into context by noting he was not a lover of the films of Bing Crosby. Thus:

11 October, 1938: *Dr. Rhythm.* A wretched picture in which she (Beatrice Lillie) [was] not in the *least* funny.

22 August, 1942: *Holiday Inn.* The type of picture, whilst not unpleasant in the least, makes one ashamed of being connected with the pictures.

12 July, 1943: (On being asked to make writing contributions to the *Going My Way* script). It was the kind of Catholic propaganda that makes me throw up. (Obviously he declined to work on the film script.)

Brackett recounts a meeting held on February 1st, 1946. It involved Bing, Johnny Burke, James Van Heusen and Wilder. The director held the view that the composers had written weak songs for earlier Crosby pictures. It may be significant that Van Heusen had no hand in the final score. One sticking point at that February meeting was the inclusion of "I Kiss Your Hand, Madam" in the film. Brackett writes that Bing and the two composers "thought it awful". This would seem to be at odds with our knowledge of Bing's musical tastes. The song is included on the recent CD of Kraft Music Hall songs. It was incorporated in a medley broadcast on December 19th, 1935. If Bing thought the song awful he would not had sung it then.

Brackett attended the Paramount recording session held on May 17th, 1946. It took eleven takes before a suitable performance of "The Kiss in Your Eyes" was captured. Brackett acknowledges that this contrasts with the two or three takes that were common on Crosby recording sessions.

Brackett and Wilder were present at the test screenings of the completed film. The first one took place at Long Beach on November 27th, 1946. Audience reaction was favourable but a decision was taken to cut the sequence where Bing sings "Get Yourself a Phonograph". Luckily what fell to the cutting room floor was salvaged and the song was eventually issued on the "Going Hollywood Volume 4" CD some years ago. A second test screening was then held just over a week later and Brackett records, "Audience enjoyed the picture thoroughly."

The film's West Coast premiere took place on 26th May, 1948. The finished film had been on the shelf for well over a year so that Bing's 1947 film *Road to Rio* could do the rounds. That film was completed a good

half year after *The Emperor Waltz* and was ready for screening. Paramount took a view that the latest *Road* film was a sure fire hit, already presold to filmgoers. They did not have the same confidence in *The Emperor Waltz*.

Bing listens to Charles Brackett

The Los Angeles premiere was an over the top affair because it was making history as the first film premiere to receive live outside broadcast television coverage. In keeping with that event a party was held after the film at the Beverly Hills Hotel with four hundred guests in attendance. The UK premiere took place the following spring but it was not until June, 1948 that *The Emperor Waltz* had its New York premiere at Radio City Music Hall.

The film more than broke even. Originally budgeted at $2.6 million that figure was raised to $2.9 million one month before filming commenced. At the time it was Paramount's second most expensive film, topped by *Frenchman's Creek (1944),* which also starred Joan Fontaine. There was no box-office boost for the film following the Oscars. Just one nomination was put before the Academy voters: Edith Head and Gile Steele for costume design for a colour film.

I'll end with an item which could well find a home in an edition of' Ripley's "Believe or Not". On 1st September, 1948, a screening of *The Emperor Waltz* was followed by a vaudeville revue featuring Bela Lugosi as Dracula at the Olympia Theatre, Miami. I find it difficult to define the cinema's target audience.

Keith Parkinson k.parkinson1941@btinternet.com

Herbert W. Armstrong Hosted Bing Crosby's Dramatic 50th Anniversary Performance

This headline on the web site of *thetrumpet.com* on November 21, 2013 puzzled your editor. Further research revealed that **Herbert W. Armstrong** (31 July 1892 -16 January 1986) founded the Worldwide Church of God in the late 1930s, as well as Ambassador College (later Ambassador University) in Pasadena in 1946, and was an early pioneer of radio and tele-evangelism. He also founded the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, which promoted the arts, humanities, and humanitarian projects. Through his role with the foundation, Armstrong and his advisers met with heads of governments in various nations, for which he described himself as an "ambassador without portfolio for world peace."

Ambassador Auditorium is located on the historic Ambassador College campus and it was built under the guidance of Mr. Armstrong as both a facility to be used by the Worldwide Church of God for religious services and as a concert hall for public performances celebrating the performing arts. Its architectural design has been noted to be somewhat similar to that of the Temple of ancient Israel. It had a capacity of 1262 in the main hall and at the time of its construction the building was furnished with Iranian onyx, African teak, wool carpet from India, and splendid gold overlay.

So it was that Bing went to the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena in March 1977. Gareth Fraser, Writing on *thetrumpet.com* tells us more.

Historic tribute drew Hollywood entertainers to Ambassador Auditorium.

Famed vocalist and actor Bing Crosby videotaped a 50th anniversary television special on March 3, 1977, at Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, California. The 90-minute performance was broadcast by the CBS network on March 20, from 9 to 10:30pm.

The performance honored his five decades of accomplishment in the entertainment industry. *The Worldwide News* reported: "Celebrating with him, besides Bob Hope, were Paul Anka, Pearl Bailey, Rosemary Clooney, the Joe Bushkin Quartet, the Mills Brothers, Bette Midler, Bing's wife, Kathryn, daughter Mary Frances, son Nathaniel and others.

"The presentation … sponsored by Kraft Foods when televised, was also a benefit performance to aid WAIF, a child adoption agency founded by actress Jane Russell, and the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation's scholarship fund for international students. Miss Russell was in the audience, O'Connor, Martha Raye, Frank Capra, Phil Harris and others." (March 14,

1977).

At the time, J. Walter Thompson was the largest international advertising agency, and the firm was not only tasked with the job of managing the Bing! TV special, but also promotional guidance of the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, of which Mr. Armstrong was founder and chairman.

The special opened with a video sequence of Crosby outside Ambassador Auditorium singing "Of Bing We Sing" *(Editor - it was actually Bob Hope)* while greeting his co-stars as they entered the acclaimed performing arts building. Buz Kohan and Ray Charles collaborated on the writing and music for the tribute. In addition to a variety of medleys, other numbers performed were "Glow Worm," "Everything Old Is New Again," "Tenderly," "I Surrender Dear," "Just One More Chance" and "Blue Hawaii."

According to the same edition of *The Worldwide News,* Crosby told the audience of 1,200 during taping that it was his "pleasure to perform in such a beautiful theater," while Bob Hope expressed to the packed house that they were in a "beautiful auditorium."

With construction of the 45,000 square foot facility completed a mere three years earlier, the unique performing arts center featured a spiraling egret sculpture fountain at its entrance, while the interior boasted a glass-encased foyer with teak from Africa, onyx from Iran, carpet from India, stunning gold overlay, and a concert hall punctuated by acoustical clouds enhanced tenor and tone. Ambassador Auditorium had been catapulted into the minds and hearts of not only Los Angeles concertgoers, but the Hollywood film and television elite.

During his final comments of the musical special, Crosby said, "I hope it won't be another 50 years before we can celebrate like this again." As the audience honored him with a standing ovation, he turned the wrong way to exit the stage and fell into the orchestra pit.

Mr. Armstrong who attended the performance and was just rows away from the incident said, "It was obvious that Bing was very tired and was probably vastly relieved to have finally arrived at the final scene. He had been working hard for several days in advance and had actually been in the auditorium doing his own stand-ins in rehearsal since about 8 a.m. that morning. You can imagine how tired he would have been, at age 72, and, perhaps, turning to the crowd and waving one more time, simply did not realize he was taking a step in the wrong direction."

Crosby was rushed to Pasadena's Huntington Memorial Hospital and admitted for a few days treatment and recovery of the trauma - a cut to the head and some bruises. Days later, the hospital spokesman told the media Bing was "in very high spirits."

Within seven months of the anniversary concert's conclusion, Bing Crosby died. Perhaps in the quieter moments at home or abroad, perhaps those who performed, attended or watched the March 20, 1977, concert recall not only that special event, but also its patron Herbert W. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong was internationally recognized as an unofficial ambassador for world peace and preached the gospel message to world leaders in all corners of the globe (Matthew 24:14).

Bing Crosby's accolades of Ambassador Auditorium's grandeur are similarly expressed by performers in its successor concert hall, Armstrong Auditorium.

Armstrong International Cultural Foundation founder and chairman Gerald Flurry has followed in Mr. Armstrong's footsteps. Having taken the time to review the exterior, interior and acoustical blueprints of Ambassador Auditorium, he instructed the architects of Armstrong Auditorium to use Ambassador's design as a model for its $25 million successor.

Now in its fourth year, performers from around the globe grace Armstrong Auditorium's stage, enjoying the peaceful environs and one-of-a-kind hospitality of the Foundation. This "polished jewel lifting the human spirit" is adorned with Swarovski-trimmed crystal chandeliers, Baccarat crystal candelabra, American cherry wood veneers, Spanish marble and Azerbaijani onyx. The hall's superb internal acoustics and the soaring "Swans in Flight" sculpture, designed by Sir David Wynn, whose sculptured egrets fronted Ambassador Auditorium, combine to set Armstrong Auditorium apart in a class of its own.

Gareth Fraser

Bing'll Be Dreaming of a White Christmas Again

Some time ago, Roger Schore sent Greg Van Beek an article from the New York Times of December 13, 1970. Some of the content is familiar but in addition the interviewer, Judy Stone, touched on a few different topics...

Flashback: Chicago, 1927. The cellar at 222 State Street. By midnight the joint was really jumping. The musicians piled in to hear Bix Beiderbecke blow his horn and one of history's greatest jam sessions was under way. Gene Krupa, Eddie Condon, Joe Oliver, Herman Foster - they all pitched in. "Bing had the spirit too," recalls Mezz Mezzrow in his book "Really the Blues." "He beat time all night with his hands like he was at a Holy Rollers meeting."

New York, 1930. The Corner, 131st Street and Seventh Avenue. At first Guy Lombardo was head man. Then Louis Armstrong's records hit the juke boxes fast and they rocked all Harlem. "They all blared out Louis, Louis and more Louis," wrote Mezzrow. "Around The Corner, there was only one record we'd allow on the boxes with Louis-Bing Crosby's 'When the Blue of the Night.' That was a concession to the sentimental chicks..."

1970. And something like 2,700 songs on 300,650,000 Bing Crosby records later, Bing is living among the millionaires south of San Francisco in a $250,000 Hillsborough home fitted out with surplus stock from the castles at San Simeon compulsively collected by his old friend, William Randolph Hearst. The "Holy Roller" and the Big Boozer have gone the way of all flesh and bursitis keeps the old golfer from swinging in the low 70's on Pebble Beach, but there's a song in him still.

Der Bingle will do his 35th Christmas show Wednesday night at 8 on NBC. Of course, he will sing those two all-time blockbuster best-sellers-"Silent Night," just as he started doing on radio in 1935, and "White Christmas", just as he's done since Irving Berlin wrote it for him in 1942.

In the old days, Bing used to be joined by his four sons, Gary, the twins Phillip and Dennis, and Lindsay. Now they're settled down, fathers themselves, and Bing is no longer apologizing for their nightclub scrapes. He spells out their new lives: "Gary is militantly anti-alcohol and nightclub. He works a lot on TV. Phillip, who has a very good singing voice, is on tour all the time. Lindsay is with a company that makes low-budget movies and Dennis works for an air freight company." Once, in 1950, Bing's first wife. Dixie Lee, a promising Tennessee singer who was always shy, and insecure about her voice, broke out of her 15-year retirement from show business to appear with them on a Christmas show. She was to die of cancer at the age of 40 less than two years later.

This will be the fourth Christmas show with the members of Crosby's second family. His wife Kathryn Grant, 36, a sweetheart-faced whirl of a Texas girl with a steel backbone, is an ex-starlet and summer stock actress who is still stagestruck. Incongruously, she is also a registered nurse who does her thing for the local folks when the Crosbys stay at their Baja California ranch or go on safari in Africa. She does substitute school teaching, fully credentialed, in Hillsborough and is the author of a girlish book, "Bing and other Things". Their three children are Harry Lillis III, 12, named after his father; Mary Frances, 11, who's caught the acting bug; and Nathaniel Patrick, 9. None of Bing's eight grandchildren, aged 10 years to 15 days, have made the scene yet.

I managed to catch up with Bing between duck shooting trips. The road to his 4.1 acre estate is distinguished by a giant eucalyptus tree; brick columns flank an iron entrance gate to the two-and-a-half-story whitewashed red brick house. A friendly British butler ushered me into the handsome family room with its comfortable overstuffed beige cotton brocade sofa. One wall is lined with leather-bound sets of Thackeray, Benjamin Franklin, Dickens, Damon Runyon, Ring Lardner, H. G. Wells, books on horse racing, on art, on birds, books on everything in the wide range of Crosby's interests. Hanley and Russell oils of cowboys and Indians decorate the room.

On the fireplace mantel are a statue of Crosby's favorite horse, Meadow Court, which won the Irish Derby the day after Crosby bought a one-third owner's share, and the Oscar Crosby won in 1944 for his portrayal of Father O'Malley, the athletic priest in *Going My Way*. On the sideboards are old Christmas card photos of Princess Grace, Prince Rainier and their children; the Bob Hopes and their clan; Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Firestone; Dean Martin, Rosemary Clooney and Frank Sinatra, who saw a Crosby movie at 17 and came away convinced he could do it too. Elegant cupboards display the Fabergé crystal lilies of the valley and blueflowers Bing gave to Kathy in admiration and astonishment when she won her R.N. credentials. No matter that he was awakened every morning at 5 A. M. for five years while she thought she was slipping soundlessly out to do her student nursing. (He also gave her a grim cartoon of the Divine Sarah to study whenever she threatens to run away and become a great dramatic actress.)

A magnificent Brazilian amethyst mineral crystal cluster is mounted at one end of the library; at the other a small rock, painted red with tiny chartreuse and pink flowers reads "Soul is feeling depth, and ability to reach someone...it's just cool to be alive..." It's the work of a Sister at Immaculate Heart College in Claremont, where Mrs. Crosby is chairman of the Board of Regents and recently enriched the school by $1,000,000. Perched on

the bar is a Norman Rockwell painting of a bleary, bearded Bing clutching the bottle in his last film, a poor 1966 remake of *Stagecoach*. An iridescent stuffed pheasant is a reminder of Crosby's main interests today - hunting and fishing.

That's clear from the conversation in the hall. "You'd better draw and quarter the ducks, Fisher," the familiar baritone instructs the butler. His voice was once insured by Lloyd's of London for $100,000, setting off false rumors that it had that certain mellifluous something because of nodes in his throat.

Crosby strolls in, wearing a light tan bush jacket and darker trousers, fairly conservative for a man noted for his color blindness and oddball sloppy dress. The open blue shirt matches his eyes. He'll be 67 on May 2, but he doesn't appear much older than he did in all those movies where he amiably played himself, In fact, he looks better. I had never thought of him as handsome, but he is. More so without the famous hairpiece, less callow, more thoughtful. Baldness becomes him. (Remember how the man crooned, "Moonlight becomes you…"?)

Earlier, on the telephone, it had been clear he wasn't overjoyed at the prospect of a zillionth interview. Once into it, however, he was cordial, patient and ostensibly open. But everyone from his closest friends to the butler says, "Nobody really knows Bing." What consistently came across was the man's balanced appraisal of himself and his family; modesty about his limitations as an actor; recognition of his happy combination of luck and the willingness to accept sound advice. His relaxed live-and-let-live attitude even took the edge off his innate conservatism.

After all, he is a millionaire, even though he was once a poor Spokane boy, one of seven children sired by a relaxed but struggling bookkeeper. Just how many millions he has today is anybody's guess. "I saw a story about all the actors," Crosby said. "My God, it was ridiculous. They said Hope has $400-million and I have $200-million. It only makes us a target for more appeals. If I sold out right now and got what I thought everything was worth, I'd be delighted to get $3-3.5-million. So would my business manager." (The business manager said Crosby was being modest and a bit conservative.)

Crosby's major investments now are in real estate and oil. He still owns 16 percent of the Pittsburgh Pirates, but long ago sold his stable of racing horses and other property to help pay $1,000,000 in taxes when he inherited Dixie's half of their community property. Although Kathy and the children still do an annual commercial for Minute Maid orange juice, he sold his stock in the company years ago. He no longer puts up the purse even for the annual Pebble Beach Pro-Amateur Golf Tournament he founded. This January it will be $170.000, the highest in history, with NBC-TV picking up the tab. The profits, about S150,000, will again go to charity, helping to support California youth centers and student loan funds in 50 colleges in 25 states.

Bing Crosby Productions, which had a good profit record in TV including gains from "Ben Casey," "Slattery's People" and "Hogan's Heroes" and a poor one in movies with *The Great John L* and the controversial *Abie's Irish Rose*, was sold to the Cox Broadcasting Company in Oakland in exchange for stock. Bing recently became half-owner of Electrovision, which produces, in multi-media sight and sound, 1970-style visits to colorful cities with all the substance of old Fitzpatrick travelogues.

Crosby laughs agreeably at stories that say he is the financial brains behind his fortune. "Not at all. I have tremendous interest in it, but no faculty for it. It's always been someone like my lawyer who has advised me."

He says he really is lazy, but he won't consider complete retirement. He did 15 TV shows last year and worked 90 days, which gave him ample time for his fifth safari to Africa.

There's quite a lineup for next year already. With a mischievous chuckle, Crosby revealed that he will play a sinister doctor on ABC's Movie of the Week, "Dr. Cook's Garden", do another of ABC's "American Sportsman" shows, and he'll collect a platinum record for the sale of his 300-millionth record on Flip Wilson's program, Jan. 7 on NBC. He'll be on the opening night of Pearl Bailey's new ABC series Jan. 23, and his admiration for her talents - from singing to cooking - is

unbounded. "I never saw a women with so much, zeal and drive and talent," he said. "She and Louis Armstrong will do a very nostalgic number together."

With Pearl Bailey on her TV show.

Bing's made a lot of music and movies with Satchmo, but he had never read Armstrong's story in *Ebony* in 1961. In it, Armstrong said, "The movie stars are friendly to Negroes. When we finished "High Society", Bing gave me a golden money clip which I use, inscribed; "To Louis from Bing" and when he had a baby girl, I sent him a telegram, "Now you have jazz". He has a whole wall of my records and every record he makes, I buy. But we aren't social. In fact, I've never been invited to the home of a movie star-not even Bing's."

Crosby's eyes clouded and he admitted he was very troubled to hear that. "I was with him a lot when we worked but he was always so busy. I never went home then either, probably. I wish I had read that. I would have had him to my house in the morning. I love him. He's a great man. I wish I hadn't been so neglectful. It was neglectful. That's all it was. There are white people I've never had to my home either - because I'm not very thoughtful, If they want to fish or play golf or something, I'd probably have them along, but we entertain very little."

Crosby puffs away on the inexpensive thin-stemmed, English merchant service pipe he always smokes and gets a mellow look, perhaps thinking back to the days when he sang in New York with Harry Barris and Al Rinker as the Rhythm Boys with Paul Whiteman's band. After hours, he'd tear off to the Cotton Club hear Cab Calloway, Ethel Waters, Florence Mills and to Ella Fitzgerald. The bright kid who dropped out of pre-law studies at the Jesuits' Gonzaga College in Spokane dug the Dixieland beat, but I couldn't tell if he really understood the blues.

He's a man who always seems to have had happy times, easy luck. Ask if he wasn't ever miserable and he draws on the pipe and says, "Yeah, after a bad golf round or up in a duck blind when it's cold and there's not a bird flying. Or fishing in Iceland or England when the water was high and the fish were dour."

He didn't do much fruitless casting in his career and he has chalked up a fantastic number of firsts. He was the first radio performer to convince a network (CBS) to let him prerecord his program (the old "Kraft Music Hall"), (sic- it was ABC with Philco Radio Time) one of the first actors ask for a share in film profits,and had the first production company to film TV drama - which had been live up to then. Much earlier, in 1930, he had the first informal work-furlough program in the history of California penology. Universal had dreamed up a film, "King of Jazz", for Paul Whiteman, and Crosby was to sing a solo. He rehearsed and rehearsed and then relaxed and relaxed. Finally he wound, up in court charged with reckless driving and under suspicion of drinking.

"Don't you know there's a Prohibition law?" demanded the judge. "Yeah," said Crosby flippantly, "but nobody pays much attention to it." He got 30 days in which to pay attention. But Whiteman got him sprung, several days for a few hours to do a number with the Rhythm Boys, under a bailiff's watchful eye. Nights he slept in jail.

But that was another, time, another world. Crosby doesn't see analogies between his drinking and the drug problem today. "It's saddening. It's deplorable that some young musicians have to resort to that to pump themselves up. When I drank it was to have a good time. I imagine these kids now travel one-night stands and they get exhausted and feel all in and insecure and resort to these things. It's terrible if they become addicted because it's really no solution to their problems. Once in a while I met jazz musicians who smoked pot for kicks but I never met any who were addicted. Maybe some of became addicted later. The only solution is to prevent young people from becoming involved with drugs. Parents just have to be closer to their children. Kathryn has done some work at the Haight-Ashbury clinic and she's shown our children what it can do to their minds and bodies. She's convinced them that it's an empty road to go down."

Crosby's only touch of defensiveness comes when you ask about his voice. Critics said it started to go downhill in '47. "It would be fine if I sang more," he said. He has just recorded three new Christmas songs,

but he doesn't sing much anymore. "I no longer have a recording contract. My records don't sell any more." (His manager says the royalties are still in "six figures" every year.) Does his changed position bother him? "Hell, no!" he said emphatically. "I had a long run. I'm grateful."

Although the Crosbys go to the opera frequently, he has never been to the Fillmore to hear rock groups. "You see them on the tube," says Crosby, who likes to retire early. "Some of it is exciting. The Fifth Dimension is very good. All the groups have progressed immensely in the last 10 years. They have better harmonies and instrumentation."

He really prefers singers like Andy Williams and Glen Campbell. "I don't know anyone who can sing a song as well as Andy - he has tremendous range." Ask if he's heard Janis Joplin, he returns with a question. "She's the girl who died? No." Jimi Hendrix?' "No." Dylan? "No, he's very big, isn't he?" Joan Baez? "She sings well, but I don't care for her political views. She's kind of a violent political person -" "No! Non-violent," I interrupt." Well, not violent," he concedes easily. "But I don't think she should use her talents to advance her political philosophy. If she wants to be in politics, she ought to go into politics. If you want to be an entertainer, you have to entertain."

What about Ronald Reagan?

"Well, he quit entertaining."

"You don't think he's entertaining anymore?"

Crosby plays it straight. "I think he's a very effective politician. He was just re-elected. I think he's done a pretty good job." He doesn't support any candidates actively, although he once urged people to vote for Wendell Willkie. He also favored Shirley Temple and George Murphy, an "old, old friend" from nightclub and vaudeville days.

"I don't know if George was a good Senator," he says. "I just don't like politics. I don't like the patronage and the way it's done. The 'you vote for me and I'll vote for your bill.' The cliques. I don't like what people have to do to get elected and what they do after they're elected. I just don't like the party system. Things should be done for the good of the country. The party can put a man in power whether or not he is qualified. If I had to name anyone in the last 50 years in American politics whom you could consider a genuine statesman, I'd be hard put to come up with a name except Robert Taft or maybe Eisenhower, who wasn't a politician...and he wasn't effective."

He did vote for John F. Kennedy, who later made his historic bypass of Sinatra to stay in Crosby's Palm Springs home. "I liked Kennedy's image. I thought he was very bright. He had a lot of class, a lot of charm, a lot of charisma and still he was a man's man. But politicians always seem to me kind of phony. And I think the lobbying in Washington is disgraceful-including the gun lobby. I think Nixon is trying to do a good job. I certainly think we ought to pull back internationally, get out of Vietnam if we can do it with some face-saving and leave them in a shape where they at least have a chance of surviving.

There is one politician he would like to portray - Ben Franklin, whom he considers, one of the few great American Statesmen. Of the 53 films (and four Mack Sennett shorts) Crosby has made, he most enjoyed the two major "priest" movies, "Going My Way" and "Bells of St. Mary's". "I'm not a professional Catholic," Crosby says, "but I am a practicing one. I can't see anything more important than faith."

Bing as Father O'Malley in *Going My Way.*

He is opposed to new changes in the liturgy against the clergy being out of habit and against marriage for priests. As for activist priests like the Berrigan brothers, now in a Federal penitentiary for destroying draft records, Crosby says: "If they interfered with government processes, they're breaking the law and they've got to be in jail."

"Maybe the Fathers believe their higher duty is to God and not the state," I suggested, recalling a statement of faith Crosby once wrote for Appreciate America, Inc. It showed him as Father O'Malley asking "Going My Way?" The text said: "It is the American Way to believe in a God! God, not the state is the source of man's rights! The fatherhood of God is the only guarantee of the brotherhood of man."

"Well, I think God would want them to obey the laws of the state," said Crosby. "They've got to conform."

"What if the state is Nazi Germany?"

"I think the Catholic clergy have to obey the Vatican in everything. The Vatican interprets God for man. It

is not a priest's prerogative to interpret God."

"What if the Popes differ with each other?"

"Whoever is in authority," Crosby answered, equably. "Maybe God has given the new Pope a different revelation. I had an audience with Pope John and he was a very lovable man with a great sense of humor. I liked his theories about changing the church to fit the changing times. What was good 50 years ago isn't good for people now. There's so much permissiveness. In order to combat it, the church has to get involved in social relations."

Did he then approve of the Catholic clergy who went South to fight segregation?'

"I think they were stickin' their nose into something that doesn't concern them at all. I believe in state's rights." (Later he telephoned saying "a lot of people could jump on me for that" and emphasizing that he fully supported enforcement of Federal anti-segregation laws: he just didn't believe Northerners should go South and stir up trouble. He also wanted to make sure he had not given the impression that he thinks all politicians are crooks because he certainly did not mean that.)

Before he gets much older, he would still like to make more movies, "but most of the scripts I get are porno, message or violence." An American company suggested he play Scrooge, but he turned it down when he heard about the British film and he thought Albert Finney was magnificent in it. "Anyway, I don't think I would have been believable as Scrooge for a minute. Everybody knows I'm just a big good-natured slob." If he has any regrets about his life it's that he hasn't been more energetic as a writer. "I didn't have the industry, the recall or the inventive powers, but I would have liked to put together a golf book and the publishers are always after me to do a biography. I wasn't really satisfied with "Call Me Lucky" although I thought Pete Martin did a good job. But everything's been covered. I'm not a very interesting subject really," said Bing Crosby philosophically.

Judy Stone

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

Lars Schinnerling, by email from Lagen, Germany

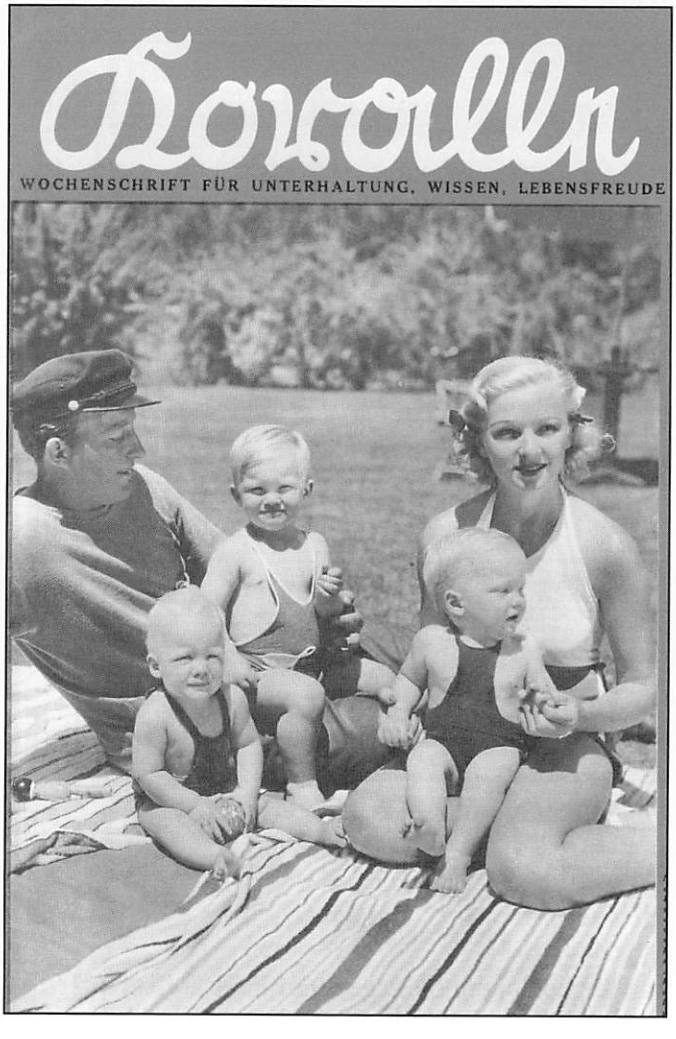
Yesterday, I got a bunch of old German magazines called *Koralle* from the years 1938 to 1940. Most of the covers grace some very beautiful girls (some stars, some completely unknown), some the inevitable "Fuehrer" but one caught my attention as it pictures Bing and his family!

As you may know, I'm a member of the club for decades but cannot recall this cover being featured in your magazine. Perhaps you would like to print it in one of the future issues if you consider it appropriate. Funny thing is that the caption reads "A movie (!!) star, very popular in the USA." I think it's so odd that he is not mentioned by name. Perhaps back then he also had quite a following in Germany???? I'm not aware that any of his movies were shown in Germany up until 1945. I know most of Shirley Temple's movies were shown, Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy and a few other "harmless" musicals.

Are you aware that any Germany 78s brand issued his recordings here at the time? I only know about post-war releases.

(Editor: I had images of several of Bing's German releases and I sent a couple over to Lars but I wasn't sure whether they were pre-war or not.

The next email was received too late for inclusion in our last issue.)



Preston Neal Jones, by email from Hollywood, California, USA

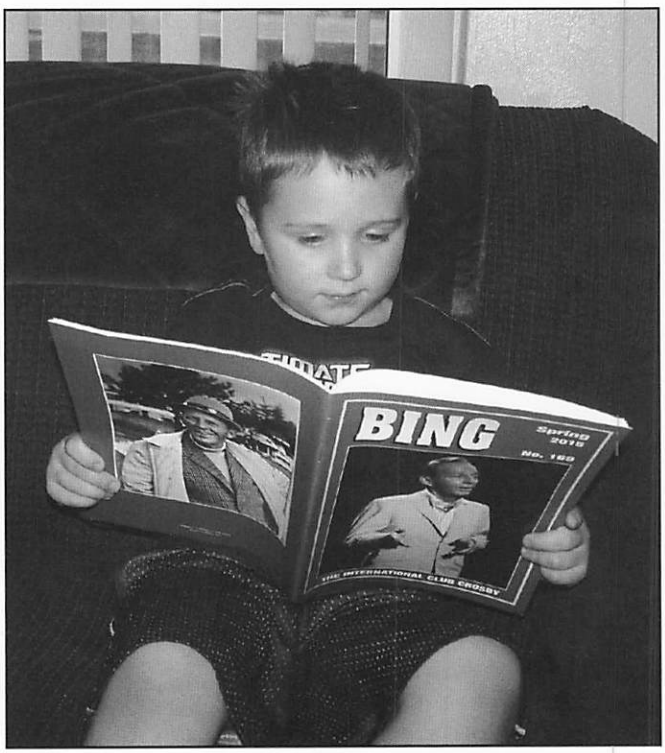
Thanks to you and all concerned for another wonderful BING issue, (winter, #168). Right now, I'm reading the recollections from Leeds 2014, and I must offer one small correction. I guess it's a lucky thing for Mr. Halls that this year he derived material directly from notes supplied by the presenter, Mr. Huntoon, because now he can disavow any responsibility for this error on page 36: The Gershwin tune "Mine" was not written for *Jubilee* (a Cole Porter show) but for *Let 'Em Eat Cake.*

That said, if I may be permitted a personal aside, Bing and Judy Garland's duet, which I first heard on an old 78 RPM disc, has long been one of my favorite Crosby recordings, and one of my favorite Gershwin tunes

Keep up the great work.

David Lobosco, by email from Glenshaw, Pennsylvania, USA

The latest issue of BING came in a few days ago and I am the third person to read it. I think there is hope for the future -my five year old son Dominic and my two and half year old daughter Samantha grabbed the magazine before I did. It was so cute. Samantha especially looked at the magazine for two hours! It is great when there are young fans of Bing out there. I used to be a young fan. Haha!



Dominic Lobosco casts a critical eye over the magazine.

Howard Crosby, by email from Walla Walla, Washington, USA

In the photograph on Page 20 of the last issue (#169), I do believe that the girl in the picture off to the left is Mary Rose Crosby. Perhaps Carolyn can weigh in as well... Also, the older boy over Bing's left shoulder is my Dad, Ted Crosby.

Carolyn Schneider, by email from Las Vegas, Nevada USA

Malcolm, I agree. That sure looks like my mother.

(Editor: It's great to get the facts about these historic photos!)

Ron Field, by email from Morton, Washington, USA

Back a fortnight from 7 weeks in Australia and finally reading BING. On page 19, Thomas Short states that Bing was the 5th. of 7 children. I thought he was 4th. Everett, Larry, Ted, Bing, the girls, then Bob in 1913.

Kevin Greenlee, by email from Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Getting a new issue of BING always brightens my day; I really appreciate all the hard work you put into producing such consistently excellent publication. The fan club dues could go up a great amount and the magazine would still be a terrific bargain. Thank you so much for all the pleasure you've given me.

I wonder, by the way, if you happen to be familiar with a podcast called "You Must Remember This." The show focuses primarily on mid 20th century Hollywood and so, of course eventually got around to covering Mr. Crosby. Fans might take issue with a few things in the episode but I, at least, found it an interesting listen. If you're interested, the show can be found at http://www.vidiocy.com/youmustrememberthispodcastblog

Scroll down to the March 24, 2015 entry to get the episode with Mr. Crosby-and don't get thrown off by the fact that "Star Wars" is in the title. The host uses that phrase to indicate that the episode deals with the activities of stars in wartime.

David Currington, by email from Turramurra, New South Wales, Australia.

The magazine has now been distributed to the local members with feedback from a couple being nothing but glowing. Thanks once again for a stupendous effort.

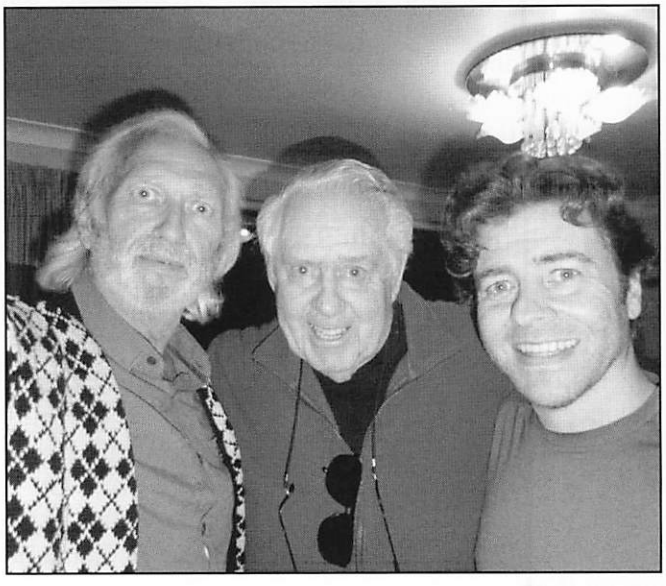
And the greatest thrill is the KMH disc which Michael forwarded, arriving last week. This ranks with the Woodbury CD of a few years ago as being something which the collectors could never have imagined being a reality. Bing here is extremely free in his vocals with the up-tempo numbers and tremendously commanding with the ballads. Of course the half dozen or so songs which we've never previously heard Bing sing are already becoming familiar to the ear with so many repeated playings. It is always a fascination to hear Bing render alternative versions of songs he recorded or we know from his radio work and here 'Dinah' is a superlative example of a totally fresh presentation. It is

obvious that Geoff Milne has put much work into making these tracks so listenable. John Newton should be given a knighthood for his contribution to the world of entertainment. Thank you to you and everyone associated with the production of this outstanding CD.

I've just finished a scrutiny of the two AFRS BASIC MUSIC LIBRARY CDs issued by Submarine a couple of years back. It is a revelation to me that, apart from the non-KMH tracks (commercial, GI Journal sourced) all the tracks therein from the KMH catalogue are non-broadcast versions. I assume that they are rehearsals. It's amazing that I've identified 25 alternatives that I didn't have and aren't aware of being noted anywhere.

Yesterday an old Bing fan (and club member), Ken Hopkins, visited from Melbourne and said that your recent Bing KMH CD had given him a real charge. He waited until an old Bing mate visited to play it and they both had tears welling up in their eyes as they relished every song, reinforcing just why Bing had been a lifelong obsession for them.

I'm attaching a photo taken with Ken, Thane and I after the day of nutting over the AFRS alternatives and other Bing delights.



(l to r) David Currington, Ken Hopkins, Thane Cooper.

Graham Pascoe, by email from Bathurst, NSW, Australia

Thanks for another splendid edition. As always, I look for an Australian connection with the subject matter, if there is one. Greg Van Beek's fascinating article on restoring the Philco 1201 doesn't have such a connection because, as far as I know, that was not sold 'Down Under'.

If April 1st 1950 was designated 'Bingsday' in Front Royal, Virginia, I can claim that 'Bingsday' was celebrated even earlier in Australia. In January 1945 a weekly, nation-wide radio program commenced on The Australian Broadcasting Commission's network. Presented by Phillip Lewis, it featured music from movie sound tracks rather than studio recordings. The first program included Bing's 'Swinging on a Star' and 'Silent Night, Holy Night' from *Going My Way*. (Bing's Decca record of 'Swinging on a Star' had not yet been released here.) The program which Lewis presented on 30 January 1949 was titled 'Sunday, Monday or Bingsday', a variation of the title of the well-known song Bing sang in *Dixie*. It was described as 'a words and music cruise with Bing Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald, Bob Hope and Mildred Bailey'. So, it appears that Australia beat Front Royal by fourteen months.

The reference in 'Bing on the Box' to his appearance on the *Phil Silvers Show* has special significance to Australia. When that show was televised in Australia on the evening of 3rd June 1959, Australians saw Bing on their small screens for the first time. Two days earlier The Sydney Morning Herald had reported: 'Bing with Bilko. The "Old Groaner" and master of show business makes one of his rare television appearances as a guest of Sgt Bilko in the Phil Silvers Show on Wednesday ... Bing's brother and business manager, Everett Crosby, also appears on the show.' The Phil Silvers Show was one of my favourites but I don't recall seeing that episode…

As for the future of Club, I suppose for most members the magazine is the main benefit of membership. It's certainly something I look forward to three times each year and three annual issues are important to my connection with the ICC. The editorial content is superb. It's always interesting. The excellent quality of the production, notably the colour cover photos and the (expensive?) glossy paper, is appreciated but to me secondary to the content.

I'd be willing to pay A$50 per annum for my subscription if necessary, especially if the magazine can be retained in its present form and frequency. I hope this is helpful.

(Editor: Australian members, because of the heavier postage costs, currently pay A$40 which is equivalent to US$31.70 or £20.46)

Keith Parkinson, by email from Eccleston, St. Helens, UK

I don't know what response you have had already to the Club's state of finances. I am only surprised that we have continued as long as we have without a subscription increase. I would much prefer to see the magazine continuing on a three issue a year basis without any reduction in the number of pages.

(Editor: We've had a number of responses about the club's finances. One of the most constructive was from Bob Grace and an abridged version is shown below. Members thoughts on this would be welcome)

Bob Grace, by email from Houston, Texas, USA

I read Michael Crampton's column regarding the shortfall of funds to pay for the rising costs of printing, postage, etc. for *BING* magazine with great interest. I spent about 40 years working in the publishing field, the last 20 as a publication director for a non-profit that also faced this problem.

First, let me say, "don't despair." There are some 21st century options that you might want to consider that can both lower your expenses and also improve the look of *BING* magazine while expanding its content. So please view this as an opportunity to improve the publication while putting the ICC on a sound financial foundation.

The overwhelming majority of publications like yours are produced using either Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress software. (I used Adobe InDesign since it easily tied in with Adobe Photoshop.) Once the publication issue has been created in the software, it also can be converted easily to a PDF that then can be e-mailed to your entire membership.

Distributing the publication digitally would save on both printing and postage costs. (I noticed that the most recent issue of *BING* mailed to me by Wig cost more than $2 in postage.) Digital publication and distribution also would enable you to redesign the inside pages, incorporating color, giving it more of a "modern-day" magazine look - and even expand the content or go to four publications per year - due to the savings in printing and postage.

I realize the ICC probably has some older members who "don't do computers" and would still want a printed copy mailed to them. Many publications today offer both a printed issue and a digital edition - and the digital subscription is priced lower than the print subscription. The ICC also could use two-tiered membership/subscription pricing, which would encourage members to opt for a lower cost digital subscription - enabling printing and postage saving for the ICC.

Consequently, you may want to poll your members to see if they would be interested in a digital/pdf version of the magazine, especially if it meant a lower subscription price (than a print subscription), a better-looking (or even expanded) publication that they would receive quicker. (No waiting for snail mail.)

...Hopefully once you've crunched the numbers, offering a digital subscription will save you enough to either hold the line on membership prices - or perhaps even lower it while expanding content or increasing the publication frequency. Stranger things have happened in this crazy world.

Croft O'Toole, Foster, Rhode Island, USA.

I would like to remind Bing's fans of Christine Guarnieri's "Chatterbox Old Time Radio" program which features vintage music between broadcasts of shows from the Golden Age of radio. In recent months she has featured Bing on his Kraft, Chesterfield and Philco programs, and some Crosby-Clooney shows. "Guarnieri" also plays some Crosby recordings such as "Poppa Santa Claus", "It Looks Like a Cold, Cold Winter", "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime", "Only Forever" and a singalong version of "Wait 'Til the Sun Shines, Nellie".

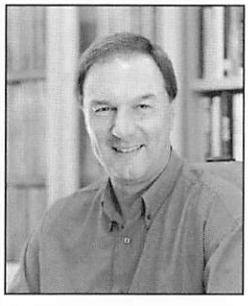
"Chatterbox Old Time Radio" is broadcast on Saturday nights from 6 p.m. to midnight over WECS 90.1 FM and is streamed on the Internet at: http://tunein.com/radio/WECS-901-s28440/

Guarnieri will take requests at chatterbox@gmail.com and she will also take off the air studio calls at 1-860-456-2164. She mentioned that her family was friends with Bob and June Crosby and that her father, Johnny Guarnieri, worked with Bob and the Bob Cats.

This fall I found, I think in Walmart, a "Reader's Digest Bob Hope - The Official Commemorative Issue". Included were several pages of the "Unforgettable Bing Crosby" an article Hope had written for Reader's Digest in 1978. Aside from this feature, there were other mentions and photos of Bing through the entire issue. They were all very positive. Reader's Digest should do one on Bing.

CROSBYANA

Ken Crossland looks at the work of Jimmy Kennedy



Isn't it wonderful when your hobbies follow you around like faithful dogs? All my life, my passions have been golf and music and every now and then, they crash serendipitously into each other.

The latest occurrence was in April in the clubhouse of the Portstewart Golf Club in Northern Ireland. I was looking at the view from the window, out onto the Atlantic and across to the coastline of Donegal. The club steward came up and told me I was looking at "the more northern part of Ireland, even though it's in the south". What he meant was that Donegal sits in the Irish Republic, aka Southern Ireland, despite its geographical location.

The same steward was soon quizzing me about what I knew of Portstewart. It seemed he was accustomed to his visitors striking out on that question, but I had a surprise for him. I knew something. So, when he told me that the most famous person to come from Portstewart was Field Marshall Montgomery of Alamein, I

expressed surprise. "Not Jimmy Kennedy, then?" I asked. He flinched. "You know about Jimmy Kennedy?" I did.

For anyone reading this who doesn't, let me tell you that Kennedy was Ireland's most famous and prolific songwriter over a 40-year career. Late in his life, he turned up as a guest on the British TV show of the Irish crooner, Val Doonican. Looking and sounding like a retired Civil Servant, he sat at a piano and accompanied Doonican on a medley of his songs. What a catalogue! Ballads, party songs, dances, wartime patriotism, Irish songs, Hawaiian songs, you name it, Kennedy doubtless had one in his repertoire. Any British reader will doubtless have danced the Hokey Cokey at some stage, or hummed "The Teddy Bears' Picnic", or seen a wartime film with someone singing about the Washing on the Siegfried Line. Well, Jimmy Kennedy was responsible for all of that.

He's best known though for what Bing, in his best French, once called "chansons nostalgiques", songs with a story, often of lost love and separation. And the most famous of them was inspired by the view I was looking at across the bay at Portstewart. Kennedy lived there in his youth and had the same view from his parents' home on Strand Road. One night, he saw a sailing boat glide across the bay in front of the setting sun and "Red Sails in the Sunset" was the result. Crosby was one of the first to record it and he featured it heavily on his fledgling KMH radio show. Now, in the clubhouse, a painting hangs on the wall of showing the boat -*Kitty of Coleraine* -against the setting sun.

Another Kennedy masterpiece was "South of the Border (Down Mexico Way)". The parentheses are significant. My host at Portstewart was now on a roll and asked if I knew that the original draft of the lyric was "Down Donegal Way", Donegal, as we could see, sitting south of the Irish border. I expressed surprise but took the story at face value. As my golf round progressed however, I found myself humming the lyric, with precious little hint of Donegal and lots of reference to Spanish lace and mission bells. So I decided to check out the Montgomery story. That was a porky too, although his family did hail from Donegal. When I confronted the steward at the end of my game, he just smiled and said, with a twinkle in his eye, "Ah well, it's a nice story -and you are in Ireland, you know!"

The strange thing is that the real story is even better. Kennedy was a words and music writer, although his real talent was for a lyric with a story. He also had a knack of backing into his song titles. Another of his songs, "Harbour Lights", came about when he was driving home one night through southern England and, lost in fog, suddenly found his headlights shining on a pub called The Harbour Lights. Kennedy said he had the song in his head by the time he got home. So too, "South of the Border". When Kennedy's two sisters took a vacation in Southern California in the mid-1930s, they sent him a postcard, with a Tijuana postmark. "We've been down to Mexico today," it said, "south of the border."

In terms of recordings, Bing covered more of Kennedy's songs that any other major singer although he was often late in getting around to them. "South of the Border" hit the music stands in 1939 and Bing sang it immediately on radio, but it was 25 more years before he cut a commercial recording (even though his image

appeared on the sheet music). Bing's 1965 Longines piece is a fine recording but nothing like the gem that a 1939 Decca version would have been. "Harbour Lights" was written in 1937 but passed over by Bing until its revival in 1950, and "The Teddy Bears' Picnic" had been around for 20 years before Bing took a swing.

Bing and Jimmy met once, in Dublin in the 1970s, courtesy of Bing's favourite Irishman, George O'Reilly. In his 2011 biography of his father, ***The Man Who Wrote the Teddy Bears Picnic***, Kennedy's son recounts the meeting and how his father had asked Bing about the arrangement for his duet with Rosemary Clooney on "Isle of Capri" (another Kennedy standard). "Yes, great arrangement," Bing had said, "Livingston & Evans." Kennedy snr. was impressed by Bing's powers of recall, although would doubtless have been less so had he known that the answer was wrong. Jay Livingston and Ray Evans were behind Bing and Rosie's ***Travellin' Two-Beat*** collaboration, but "Isle of Capri" was a Billy May creation from ***Fancy Meeting You Here*** six years earlier.

No matter. The mutual admiration was strong. Bing, in a private message, went out of the way to speak of the simplicity of Kennedy's songs. "I wish I had a bob for every time I have sung "South of the Border," he added, before going on to single out "Did Your Mother Come from Ireland" as his favourite Kennedy song (It was another accidental lyric. Kennedy's co-writer, Michael Carr, had earwigged a chat-up scene on a train when a young suitor asked a girl "Was your mother Irish?" He and Kennedy spent days trying to put that line to a melody before realising it was too short to scan.)

Kennedy was quick to repay Bing's compliment. In a radio interview, he talked about all the performers who had sung his songs, from Bing to Sinatra, Elvis to the Platters, but he singled out Crosby as the one he admired most. "I think he was the best interpreter of my songs because he sang them the way I wanted them sung," he said. "I think other writers would say the same thing. He didn't try any fancy tricks or change the tempo or mess about with it like so many performers. He didn't inject himself into the song. He had so much style, he didn't have to. He sang the song like you'd sing it to yourself." The esteemed music critic, Henry Pleasants, said something similar. "Certainly the art of no other singer has been so deceptive," he wrote, "if only because Bing's singing, at its best, has always seemed so easy, so free of artistic pretension, so devoid of any suggestion of accomplishment. No other singer, it seems to me, has been so inadequately assessed."

Ken Crossland **ken54@blueyonder.co.uk**

BING ON THE BOX

Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights -USA & Canada

Crosby films and other items seen on TV since last time include:

High Society	TCM
Holiday Inn	TCM
Road to Singapore	TCM
The Princess and the Pirate	TCM

USA & Canadian Radio

Siriusly Sinatra is a pop standards-oriented music channel featured on Sirius XM Radio channel 71 and at the end of March a special 90-minute program called *Frank Sinatra & Bing Crosby: "The Best of Friends"* was broadcast and repeated on several occasions. Nancy Sinatra (incredibly she is 75 this year!) was the host, with Chuck Granata and Mary Crosby as guests, and it was a very pleasant program indeed. Perhaps somewhat belatedly, the recent PBS documentary about Bing and the CDs issued last December were plugged. Nancy spoke warmly about visiting the Crosby home as a child and how impressed she was by the kitchen! She would visit every Christmas and she had very happy memories of those times. Mary talked about the PBS documentary and again reiterated the family's failings to promote Bing's image over the years. The songs played were:

1. Where the Blue of the Night (Bing and Frank Sinatra)

<u>Frank and Bing</u>

2. Fugue for Tinhorns (FS, Bing and Dean Martin - Reprise)
3. The Oldest Established (FS, Bing and Dean Martin) (TV)
4. Well Did You Evah (FS and Bing)

<u>From *Songs I Wish I Had Sung (the First Time Around)*</u>

5. Prisoner of Love (Bing)
6. Thanks for the Memory (Bing)
7. Mona Lisa (Bing)

<u>Frank & Bing Together on Radio and Television</u>

8. FS and Bing -Parody Medley (Edited)
9. People Will Say We're in Love (FS and Bing - Radio 1944)
10. I'm Glad He's Not Young Anymore (FS, Bing, Louis Armstrong and Peggy Lee - TV)
11. Together, Wherever We Go (FS, Bing and Dean Martin - TV)

<u>Bing Crosby & Frank Sinatra Sing Jimmy Van Heusen</u>

12. Swinging on a Star (Bing)
13. Swinging on a Star (FS- Reprise)
14. Moonlight Becomes You (Bing)

15. Moonlight Becomes You (FS -Reprise)
16. The Second Time Around (Bing)
17. The Second Time Around (FS -Reprise)
The Bing Crosby Show (1954)
18. Medley: Among My Souvenirs / September Song / As Time Goes By (FS and Bing)
From *Songs I Wish I Had Sung (the First Time Around)*
19. Thank Heaven for Little Girls (Bing)
20. Cocktails for Two (Bing)
FS, Bing and Dean Martin
21. Style (from film soundtrack)
FS and Bing - *America, I Hear You Singing*
22. Let Us Break Bread Together (FS and Bing)
Frank and Bing closer
23. The Christmas Song / White Christmas (TV -1957)

Greg Van Beek's weekly radio series *Nostalgia Radio Time* on 1420 AM WJUB has continued to bring us rare and interesting items. On May 2, Greg hosted his annual Bing Crosby Birthday Bash; "Celebrating the birthday...a day early...of the most influential singer of the first half of the 20th century." It was all Bing for the entire hour and the songs heard were:-

You Don't Have to Know the Language -I Kiss Your Hand, Madame (1947) -Honolulu (radio) 1939 -The Moon Was Yellow -Moonburn -Don't Let That Moon Get Away -Frenesi -Sunshine Cake -Going My Way -My Heart Goes Crazy -Haunted Heart -What Am I Gonna Do About You? -You and I -The More I See You -All Alone - Stars Fell on Alabama - That's What Life Is All About (3/17/76)

Nostalgia Radio Time is on for an hour each Saturday starting at 9 pm (CST) / 10 pm (ET) and it always has a "Bing Sings" segment. You can tune in online at the www.1420thebreeze.com or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows by going to the website and clicking on the 'audio archives' link.

Greg also drew my attention to an hour-long podcast in June from *Nostalgia Digest Magazine*, the long-running entertaining, educational quarterly magazine devoted to the "Golden Age" of radio, movies, music and television. Steve Darnall focused on Bing's radio work starting with his first broadcast and working through each series using excerpts from Woodbury, Kraft, Command Performance, Philco and so on. Bing's use of tape recording on ABC was highlighted and the program finished with the complete Philco broadcast from October 1, 1947. This was a very well researched and accurate production and well worth catching. Go to:

http://www.nostalgiadigest.com/podcasts.html

Arne Fogel's weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" is now being broadcast on Sundays at 8 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota, and it can be picked up internationally at http://jazz88.mpls.k12.mn.us/. As usual, we can give an example: Arne's May 10 broadcast was:

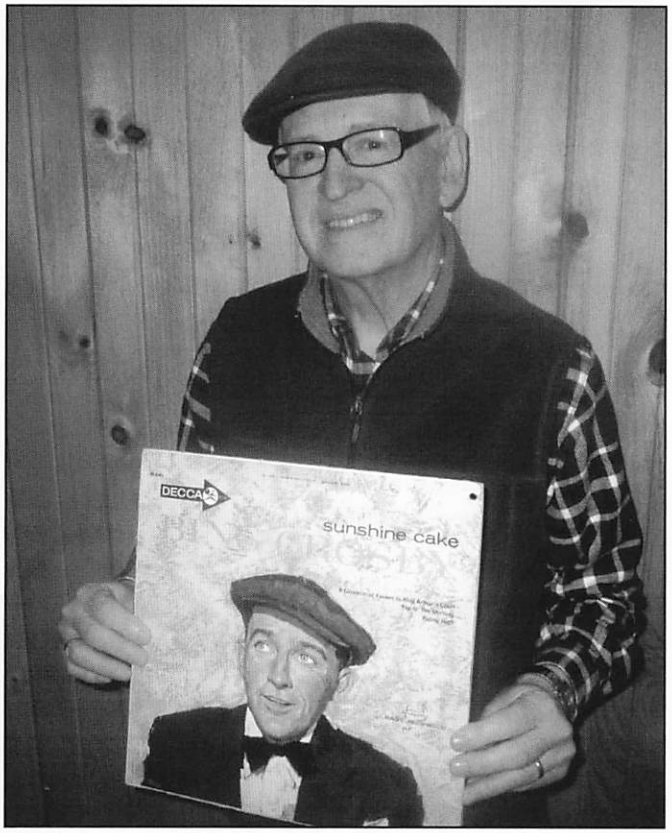
Bing sings: Mother's Day Songs

Mother Darlin' -What Do I Care, It's Home -Your Mother and Mine -My Mother's Waltz -Did Your Mother Come from Ireland (1940) -Hush-A-Bye

PLUS

Them There Eyes -My Own Individual Star -Pennies from Heaven (1936) -Say Si-Si (1968) -Some Day We'll Meet Again -Old Folks -Rosalie -Love in Bloom (1934) -La Vie En Rose (1953) -Muskrat Ramble (1956)

The first two editions of ICC member **Jack Boyle's** new 30 minute monthly radio show, *BING for the SEASONS,* were heard earlier this year. The February show featured Bing's love songs, aired on February 1st, with an encore broadcast on Valentine's Day, and the March show featuring Bing's Irish favorites, was transmitted on March 1st, with an encore broadcast on St. Patrick's Day at 7 pm.



Jack Boyle with one of the "Bing's Hollywood" LPs.

Then thanks to positive listener feedback, the program was expanded to an hour. The April show on Easter Sunday featured spring songs, including numbers with Fred Astaire and Rosemary Clooney. On May 3rd, Jack honored the men and women who have given service for the cause of freedom around the world. There was an encore broadcast on Memorial Day. Among the songs featured were "Song of Freedom"; "Vict'ry Polka" and "The Freedom Train" with the Andrews Sisters; "White Cliffs of Dover" and a patriotic medley by Irving Berlin. Next, Jack presented "Songs of summer" on June 7 which included a special message which had been recorded for him by Mary Crosby, and Bing's duets with Louis Armstrong, Rosemary Clooney, Marilyn Maxwell

and Dinah Shore. Finally, his session on July 7 was called "Songs for America" and included extracts from the album "America, I Hear You Singing" done with Frank Sinatra and Fred Waring.

BING for the SEASONS airs the first Sunday of every month at 7 pm on Hudson Valley Public Radio's JAZZ FM, streaming on HVPR.ORG with periodic encore broadcasts. For more information, email jackb18337@gmail.com.

KEZW and the Glenn Miller Archive at the University of Colorado continue to present the ***Star Spangled Radio Hour*** every Saturday night at 6pm. Hosts Rick Crandall and Dennis Spragg introduce rare live big band radio broadcasts from the 30s and 40s each week. The broadcasts can usually be accessed for a few weeks after their transmission. During the last four months, we have heard, usually in excellent quality:-

Kraft Music Hall - March 1, 1945
Command Performance - April 5, 1945
Command Performance - July 5, 1945
AFRS Special Victory in Europe (V-E) Day

The VE Day program was fascinating. It had been recorded in April 1945 at CBS ready for release to the troops when victory in Europe was achieved. The show had Bob Hope as host with Bing, Frances Langford, Dinah Shore, Ginny Simms, Judy Garland, "G. I. Jill" Martha Wilkerson, Loretta Young, Johnny Mercer, Charles Boyer, and Herbert Marshall. Bing sang "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition", "Comin' in on a Wing and a Prayer" and a short version of "Battle Hymn of the Republic".

I emailed Rick Crandall telling how much we appreciate the Crosby shows they broadcast and got a nice reply:

> Thanks for the email, and the kind words! I have been a major Bing Crosby fan since I started at KEZW in 1991 and am proud that we still play him as part of our regular music programming. When I invited Dennis to start a new show with me on Saturday nights it took me about a year but I convinced him just how important Bing was to America during the war years, and how incredible his music was. Dennis is also a big fan now!! I believe between the old radio shows that are part of the Glenn Miller Archive in Boulder and things Dennis has in his personal collection we have a pretty good collection. I have told Dennis my personal wish list is to have a copy of every Kraft program!!!

Wig has sent a copy of the magazine to Rick.

Rich Conaty's long-running ***"The Big Broadcast"*** shows from New York on WFUV continue to please. Rich puts a musical spotlight on the classic sounds of the 1920s and '30s which of course includes Bing. It's heard on Sunday nights from 8pm-Midnight (ET) and you can listen again through the WFUV archives on the Internet.

Ron Field drew our attention to the April/May 2015 issue of the AARP magazine as it had an article about Rich which can be seen at:

http://pubs.aarp.org/aarptm/20150405 pg=137#pg137

In the article there are photos of Duke Ellington, Ethel Waters, Cab Calloway and Bing. Rich says ... "There were plenty of intimate singers pre-Bing, but he put crooning on the map. And he was a jazz singer, too, a solid scat singer." The article goes on to say "Rich has about 5,000 78's and a couple of thousand CD's. He spins tunes from the 20's and 30"s. He is 60 and lives in Hudson, NY."

TV highlights -UK

Films and other items seen since our last issue was prepared were:

Bilko Presents Bing Crosby	Forces TV
High Society	TCM
Let's Make Love	SkyDramaRom
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM
Stagecoach	Film4
The Country Girl	SkyDramaRom
The Legendary Bing Crosby	Sky Arts2

Jeremy Rose spotted a nice clip of Bing singing "A Fella with an Umbrella" during a downpour on the popular BBC1 TV programme "The Antiques Roadshow" in April. As Jeremy said, "I suppose if only one person gets in touch with the BBC to enquire after the identity of the singer that would be something."

BBC1's *VE Day: Remembering Victory* broadcast on May 4 inevitably had some Crosby on the soundtrack and "You Belong to My Heart" was featured with many other songs of the time.

Sky Arts has been running a series about film greats and *Discovering: Katharine Hepburn* rather incongruously used Bing singing "I Can't Begin to Tell You" for the closing credits.

UK radio

The National Presenters on BBC Radio2

Not too much to report and songs played of which we were aware over the last four months were:

Desmond Carrington: Sam's Song (March 27) - Birth of the Blues (May 22). Desmond confused us on one show in June when he played "Money Is the Root of All Evil" by the Andrews Sisters and then said that it had been sung by Bing in *High Time*! Presumably he had intended to play "The Second Time Around".

Clare Teal: (Get Your Kicks On) Route 66 (March 15) - Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive (April 12) - Fancy Meeting You Here (June 28)

Elaine Paige: I Love You Samantha (March 22) - Swinging on a Star (April 19) - True Love (May 3) - Now You Has Jazz (May 10) - I Love You, Samantha (May 24) - Swinging on a Star (June 21)

Michael Ball: The Merry-Go-Run-Around (from film soundtrack) (May 31)

Stephen Duffy's Pocket Legend on his "The Jazz House" programme on BBC Radio Scotland on May 27 was Mr. Crosby and in a 13 minutes span Stephen warmly told Bing's story and his link to jazz. The segment finished with "Now You Has Jazz".

Stan White is a keen fan of organ music and one programme he always catches is Nigel Ogden's "The Organist Entertains". He was very pleased to hear Buddy Cole being featured with Bing singing "My Blue Heaven" to Buddy's accompaniment in a recent broadcast.

The local radio presenters

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria (and on the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radiocumbria) maintained her reputation as a Bing-booster on her Saturday night shows (10pm-midnight). In the four months to the end of June, Anne played a total of 31 Bing tracks despite April and June showing quite a drop off in the number of requests. Songs played by Anne varied from "Fools Rush In" from Kraft, "April Played the Fiddle" to "I Feel a Song Coming On".

She continues to welcome requests by email to *anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk* so email her if you want to hear lots of Bing on the radio. There's a "Listen again" facility for up to 4 weeks after the initial broadcast.

Bill Rennells ***Harmony Night*** show on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet continues to play Bing regularly. It's a three-hour broadcast starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings and he too has a "Listen Again" option. Bill regularly receives requests from Stan White (8 this time around) and Ian Lawrence and as a result he played no less than 32 tracks by the maestro during the period under review. Stan purchased three copies of the JSP CD and sent one to Bill as well as Howard Leader and Paul Barnes and Bill played "I'll See You in My Dreams" from the CD. Amongst some of the rarer tracks played as a result of our requests were "Helpless", "Do You Care" and "June Comes around Every Year".

Once a month, I send off an email to Bill, Howard Leader and Anne Hopper requesting a Bing song and they always oblige. Why not join me and email Bill with your Bing requests to *bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk*. He loves to hear from Crosby fans overseas.

BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** whose programme of big band swing and balladeers goes out each Sunday afternoon was another who received the JSP CD from Stan White and he duly played "After You've Gone" from it. Howard played another ten Bing songs as well in the 4-month period including several for me

Wherever you are in the world, please email Howard with a Crosby request at *howard.leader@bbc.co.uk*. There is a "Listen Again" option.

Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music* show on BBC Radio Wales on Sundays at 9 p.m. and she plays Bing frequently. I sent her an email thanking her for playing our man so often and she gave me a nice acknowledgment on her broadcast of March 15. Beverley promised to keep playing Bing regularly and we heard eleven songs during the period including "Zing a Little Zong" and "Busy Doing Nothing". Beverley also has a "Listen again" facility for those of you on the Internet.

The Late Paul Barnes, the two-hour show hosted by Paul Barnes over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights has a regularly monthly segment featuring the 2013 Crosby calendar. He plays the calendar song each time and usually adds another Crosby song on each occasion. Paul was another who received the JSP CD from Stan White and he played "Moonburn" and "After You've Gone" from it and followed this with "Everything Happens to Me" (with Connee Boswell) from our "Bing Crosby in the Hall" CD.

Many other local radio stations have weekend programmes which play our kind of music and **John Bennett's Sunday Club** (BBC Radio Foyle in Northern Ireland) is one of which we are aware. He has played songs like "I'll See You in My Dreams", "Sam's Song", "True Love" and "Where the Blue of the Night" during the last few months.

And don't forget Angel Radio which broadcasts a Bing radio show on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 a.m. See www.angelradio.co.uk.

Australia

John Funnell's "I've Heard That Song Before" from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. every Wednesday on WNY FM 88.9 includes Bing every week and the show can now be heard online at www.wynfm.org.au/.

The Golden Days community radio station on 95.7 FM in Victoria continues to have a half-hour programme at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons called "On Air with Bing" which broadcasts a complete Bing Crosby

radio show each week. This is presented by Bob Horsfall.

Other radio programmes featuring our man are Peter O'Brien's "Music Showcase" on Eastern FM 98.1 (Mondays 12 noon to 2 p.m.) Loris Young's show on 3WBC FM 94.1 (Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) has plenty of Crosby too.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

Once In A While

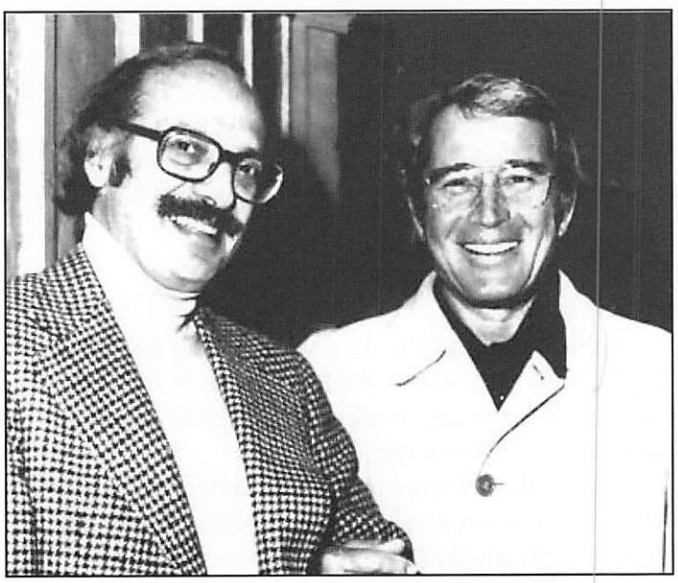
Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Ray Charles, the Emmy-winning choral director, lyricist and composer who worked with Perry Como for three decades, sang the theme song for the television sitcom "Three's Company" and didn't mind being known as "the other Ray Charles," died on April 6 at his Beverly Hills home. He was 96.

During a career that spanned radio, television, films and records, Charles was known for his ability to create melodies and meld voices in an intimate, easy-listening style that was well-suited to TV musical revues of the 1950s, '60s and '70s. He arranged and composed music for such shows as "Your Hit Parade," "Sha-Na-Na," "The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour" and "The Muppet Show," and worked with Bing, Sid Caesar, Ella Fitzgerald, Julie Andrews, Tony Bennett and other stars.

Known as an authority on American popular music, Charles also was a consultant for the annual "The Kennedy Center Honors" for 31 years.

He was best known for his long association with Perry Como. Charles and his singers not only backed Como on the show and 31 albums but accompanied him on tour. It was Como who introduced the group on the program as the Ray Charles Singers, and the name stuck.



Ray with Perry Como in 1974

The Ray Charles Singers recorded more than 30 of their own albums for the Essex, MGM, Decca and Command labels. They made the top 100 about a dozen times between 1955 and 1970 with such hits as "Love Me with All Your Heart" and "Al-Di-La."

His name often caused confusion despite obvious differences from the black, blind soul singer. One time during the Reagan Administration the white Charles was invited to join the line of Kennedy Center Honors guests allowed to meet the President. When Reagan was handed a card with Charles' name on it, he did a double-take and quipped, "I didn't know you came in two colors."

This Ray Charles was born Charles Raymond Offenberg on September 13, 1918 in Chicago. Working in radio, Broadway, and local bands, he got his major break when he landed a job as an arranger for Perry Como's radio backing group in the late 1940s, remaining in that position when Como got a TV program. By the mid-1950s, the group called the Ray Charles Singers replaced the Fontane Sisters as Como's TV backing ensemble.

Ray worked with Bing on several occasions. The first time was in 1960 when Bing guested on Perry's show. Ray also produced that excellent Bing Crosby Special in 1968 when Bing, The Supremes and Jose Feliciano sang a wonderful hit tunes medley. He provided special musical material and choral direction for Bing's 1971 Xmas show and for the 1977 Pasadena show. In an email to your editor back in 2007, Ray said of Bing:

> "I found him delightful to work with. Conscientious, witty, pleasant, open to suggestions, extremely musical. Learned immediately. I think his ability to ad lib was because he knew the material he was riffing on. I found him well-read. He was aware of what was happening."

Your editor had the great privilege of spending an afternoon with "the other Ray Charles" at his home in Beverly Hills in September 2007 whilst researching a book about Perry Como. After talking about Perry, I got him to speak about working with Bing whilst I videoed him and the video was shown at the Leeds meeting in October that year. Ray said that Bing always prepared very well and knew his material backwards. Ray mentioned an occasion when Bing guested on Perry's TV show in 1960 and a late change had to be made to one of the medleys. Bing asked when this was to be rehearsed and Ray replied "It's not." Bing said "Oh, yes it is." The orchestra had to be recalled so that Bing could run through the medley.

Bing obviously believed in the old adage "Fail to prepare and you prepare to fail."

Marty Pasetta, best known for directing the Academy Awards telecast annually from 1972 to 1988, died on May 21. He was 82. Pasetta was struck by a car he had just exited in La Quinta, Calif., in Riverside

County and he died at the scene, police said. The driver, identified as Keith Stewart, 75, of La Quinta, stopped his vehicle to drop off Pasetta and another passenger, according to the sheriff's department. Stewart then went to exit his vehicle, but accidentally left the car's transmission engaged, causing him to crash into his passengers. Marty Pasetta also helmed "Elvis: Aloha from Hawaii," which aired on Jan. 14, 1973, in more than 40 countries. The concert special, featuring Elvis Presley at the Honolulu International Center, remains one of the most watched TV programs in history. When Pasetta was chosen to take the reins of the 60th Annual Academy Awards in 1988, he set an all-time 17-year record for directing the event. He also produced and directed eight live Grammy Awards and Emmy telecasts. Pasetta's other notable credits include "AFI Life Achievement Award: A Tribute to Fred Astaire" (1981), "The Smother Brothers Comedy Hour" (1967) and TV inaugural galas for presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. He worked with Bing on at least seven occasions and he directed *Cooling It* (1970) The 1970 Christmas show, *Bing Crosby and His Friends (1972), Christmas with the Bing Crosbys (1972), Bing Crosby and His Friends (1974), Christmas with the Bing Crosbys (1974)* and most notably the Pasadena show *Bing - A 50th Anniversary Gala* (1977).

Ron Moody, who played Fagin in the hit film version of *Oliver!* died aged 91 on June 11. The British character actor was nominated for an Oscar and won a Golden Globe for his performance in the 1968 Charles Dickens adaptation. He also appeared in the British soap *EastEnders* as Edwin Caldecott, an old nemesis of Jim Branning, and played the wizard Merlin in Disney's *A Kid in King Arthur's Court.*

Moody was born Ronald Moodnick in Tottenham, north London, on 8 January 1924, the son of Jewish immigrants. His father anglicised the family name to Moody several years later. He had originally planned to be an economist and did not take up acting seriously until his late 20s. His big break came in the 1960s when he was given the part of Fagin, the leader of a band of juvenile rogues and pickpockets, in *Oliver!* the musical version of Dickens's Oliver Twist.

The actor first played the part in the stage production of Lionel Bart's musical in both the West End and on Broadway, before making the movie. His lengthy career saw him play Captain Hook five times, Uriah Heep in David Copperfield, and the title role in Sherlock Holmes -the musical. His other films included *Murder Most Foul*, *Legend of the Werewolf* and *The Spaceman.*

Ron Moody's connection with Mr. Crosby began in the Bing Crosby Show filmed in the UK in November 1961. He played a policeman who arrests our man for singing in the street. Then, of course, he had a major role playing several characters in Bing's final TV show made in the UK in September 1977. ICC member Colin Stewart recalled seeing Ron Moody in the big London show "Talk of the Town" in the late 60s. Colin tells me "Johnny Mathis topped the bill in the second half and Ron ended the first half with his cabaret act. He did a wonderful impersonation of Bing, the right voice and the face when he sang or spoke especially with the "B's" with that puff of the cheeks, it was a lovely performance which brought the house down."

"Policeman" Ron Moody watches Bing singing "The Sheik of Araby" in the Bing Crosby Show (December 11, 1961).

Lillian Cornell, the actress and singer, died on May 25 at the age of 98. She appeared in thirteen films in the early 1940s, including *Las Vegas Nights* (1941) and *Rhythm on the River* (1940). In the latter, she played Millie Starling, the Basil Rathbone character's leading lady and sang "What Would Shakespeare Have Said " She also took part in the famous broadcast on August 16, 1940 from Del Mar when *Rhythm on the River* was premiered and sang a snatch of "Where the Turf Meets the Surf".

Milton DeLugg, the musical director, bandleader, and accordionist left us on April 6. He was 96. Born in Los Angeles, young Milton played jazz accordion gigs, trying to break into show business, but he also enrolled in an accounting course at Los Angeles Junior College in case his music career did not work out. He dropped out when he was hired by the staff orchestra at Paramount studios. In 1938, Mr. Delugg joined Matty Malneck's orchestra and he is felt by some to be the accordionist in the coffee bar scene in *East Side of*

Heaven.

A successful arranger and composer, he wrote songs such as "Shanghai" and "Be-Bop Spoken Here" which Bing recorded and "Be My Life's Companion" which Bing sang on his Chesterfield show on several occasions. In 1950 and 1951, DeLugg was musical director on *Broadway Open House* an NBC late-night television program which has been considered a forerunner to *The Tonight Show*. He often played a song he co-wrote, titled, "Orange Colored Sky", which was best remembered as a hit for Nat King Cole. One of his best-known tunes was an arrangement of the song "The Happy Wanderer", and his brassy polka "Hoop-Dee-Doo" was a No. 1 hit for Perry Como and later became a game show staple.

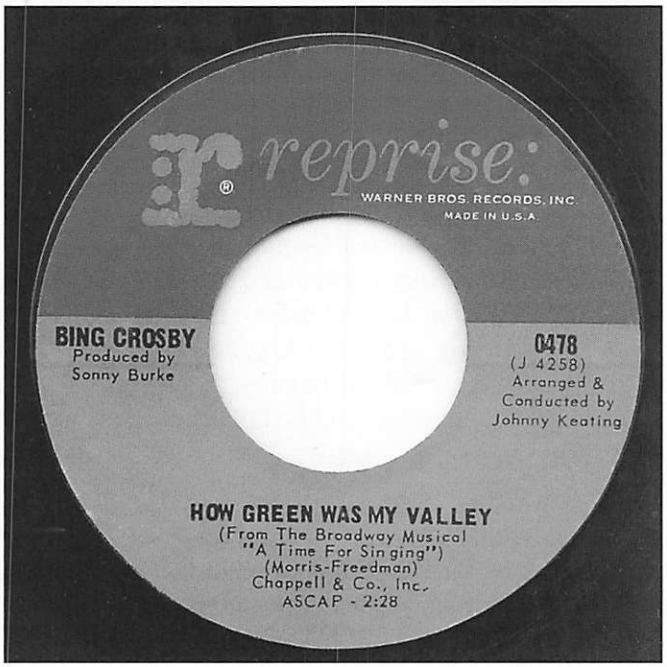
Is the accordionist Sterling Holloway or Milton DeLugg

Johnny Keating, the Scottish born composer and arranger passed away on May 28 aged 87. His performance of the theme from *Z Cars* reached No. 5 in the British charts in 1962; it was later adopted by supporters of Everton football club and is still heard as the players emerge at Goodison Park. Best known for his work with the Ted Heath Band, Keating also arranged numbers for Adam Faith ('Don't That Beat All'), Petula Clark ('Ya Ya') and Sammy Davis Jr ('My Kind of Girl'). During a spell in Hollywood he wrote the music for *Hotel* (1967), starring the Australian actor Rod Taylor. The soundtrack to *Robbery* (1967), Peter Yates's tale of the Great Train Robbery, was one of his most popular scores, and included numbers such as 'Diamond Robbery'. He worked briefly with the old groaner and made a couple of records with him. In BING magazine #135 (summer 2000) he told us about it in an article he wrote specially for us. Here's an extract.

...When I arrived in Hollywood (1965) 1 decided that this was the place for me. Who wouldn't when offered a Warner Bros. Recording Artist Contract (with my own 27-piece Orchestra, The Keating Sound), a 13-week Television Series ("The Jean Arthur Show"), and to top it all a major American movie ("Hotel"). It was sometime during all this activity that Sonny Burke, the then Head of Warner Bros. Music Department and long-time personal musical associate of Bing, asked me to do a single for the great man himself -an offer 1 couldn't refuse.

The important points surrounding this recording were:

(1) The two songs were from a new Broadway Show "How Green Was My Valley" just about to open in New York and must be recorded, like yesterday, in order to coincide with the hype of the opening.



(2) Bing was working in San Francisco and this meant it was impossible for him to come to Los Angeles to record. This necessitated a certain set of circumstances, unusual to say the least, especially way back then.

Bing hadn't heard the songs but trusted Sonny Burke's judgement that they would be good for him to record. Not knowing the songs meant that Bing could not set the appropriate keys (an extremely vital factor for any singer) so this very personal choice was left to me to figure out. Sonny also pointed out that at this later period in Bing's singing career, his higher register, as is common with all singers in similar circumstances, should be given careful consideration. There was also the problem of tempo changes -those bits near the end where a slight slowing down can enhance the emotive impact of a performance. Added to these idiosyncrasies was the strange situation -at least back then in those days -for a conductor to have no singer to conduct or to follow. In effect, I had to become Bing Crosby. As Bing, 1 had to choose my keys, my key changes, my tempos and tempo changes, my loud parts and quiet parts and be sure to see that the orchestra directed by Johnny Keating faithfully and sympathetically followed my

interpretation. What frightening power was placed in my hands. This was Bing Crosby. My father's favourite singer. The great star of Stage, Screen, Radio and Recording colossus. Help!

As it happened "How Green Was My Valley" was a Broadway failure so that was that...

Johnny Keating

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Gord looks back to a special day in 1981.

As I began writing my column for the summer edition of BING, I happened to look at the calendar and was surprised and pleased to observe that it was May 3, the anniversary date of Bing's birth. While it is an astonishing fact that he was born 112 years ago, the persona of Bing will always be as the ever youthful, finger-snapping troubadour of our halcyon days.

It seems most appropriate at this time to reflect back to the anniversary of the unveiling of his bronze statue on the campus of his alma mater, Gonzaga University, May 3, 1981. At the invitation of Father Arthur Dussault, who was known affectionately by the faculty and students of the university as "Mr. Gonzaga", I was invited to be the emcee of the statue unveiling. My opening remarks were inspired by a quote from Frank Sinatra.

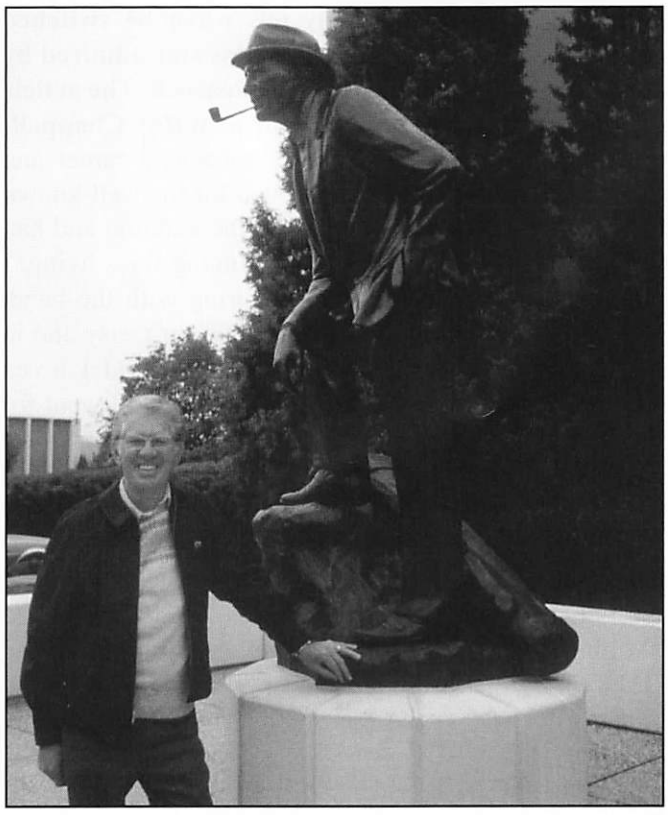
"He was the idol of my youth, the father of my career and the dear friend of my maturity" - with those few meaningful words Frank Sinatra summated his personal feelings about the modest, gentle man that we remember in happy and grateful memory today. Those of us who were privileged to know him were profoundly affected by his life.

His easy-going manner and warm personality for fifty years influenced millions of people around the world. Somehow the despondent clouds of the depression years and the dark shadows of the wartime years, were less awesome with his reassuring songs that accentuated the positive and eliminated the negative. No one could hear his voice or see him perform without having their spirits lifted.

During an interview with Peggy Lee, for my radio documentary, "The Crosby Years", with emotion she made the following observation; "He didn't really know what great things his singing did for others - or what wonderful influences his personality had on people. There is a certain security just thinking about Bing Crosby."

That quote by Peggy Lee had a meaningful application to my relationship with Bing, as did Frank Sinatra's quotation regarding their mutual admiration.

I would not feel presumptuous in applying his words to my friendship with Bing for he was indeed "The idol of my youth" and in a very special sense, "The father of my career", since it was his example that attracted me to show business. Without Bing's encouragement I would not have pursued a career in broadcasting. I was greatly privileged to know him as "A dear friend of my maturity". I concluded my address on that day in May at Gonzaga with these sincere words:



Gord beside Bing's statue.

"I know that I reflect the heartfelt appreciation of all Bing's friends and fans from around the world, when I express my sincere gratitude to the faculty and student body of Gonzaga University for making this special day in his honour a reality, and for being the custodians of the memorabilia of his unparalleled career. The Bing Crosby Library is a complete repository of Crosbyana. This superb collection will make it possible for future generations to know and appreciate the incomparable entertainer and humanitarian who was Bing Crosby.

"On this memorable day I am reminded of a quote by Ben Johnson in reference to William Shakespeare, which I believe is most appropriate on this day that we honour Bing: "He was not for an age - but for all time!"

May 3, 1981 will always be a day to remember for the faculty of Gonzaga University and for Crosby fans from around the world who were privileged to be at Gonzaga on that memorable day.

Gord Atkinson

(Editor: What lovely sentiments expressed by Gord! Another article mentioning the unveiling of the statue has surfaced as well.)

Still in Tune

Bert Hamblett drew our attention to an article by Philip Dalling in the summer issue of *Classic Speedway* magazine. The introduction read "Roy Peacock was steadily making his way in speedway with Liverpool in the early 60s when he switched careers and became a show business star admired by Bing Crosby." Who was this Roy Peacock The article eventually reveals that it was our own Roy Chappell!

The article dealt with Roy's speedway career and then detailed how he had auditioned for the well-known Sid Phillips dance band. "I passed the audition and had to choose between speedway and singing for a living. I couldn't continue to ride while touring with the band, which was constantly on the road. It wasn't easy and in fact I was really torn. I loved speedway and I loved singing. But the decision had to be made and I went for the option which promised the most success." So he chose singing.

More than half a century later, at the age of 81, Roy is still performing. "I don't have any regrets because I have had a wonderful career, performing with some of the biggest names in show business, I sang the ballad "Moon River" for the Duke of Edinburgh at the Grosvenor Hotel in London and performed twice at the Albert Hall and at the Savoy, the Dorchester and the Café Royal."

As a speedway rider he used his real name of Peacock but at his audition with Sid Phillips, he wanted to change his name. The article continued:

"Sid, who played the piano himself for my audition, looked down at the instrument, which was a Chappell. And said 'There's your new name.' So throughout my career I have performed as 'Roy Chappell'."

BING CROSBY
— ROY CHAPPELL
Roy with Bing at Belle Vue, Friday, September 23, 1977
"A TOUCH OF THE BINGS"
Issued by the BING CROSBY historical society tacoma

The other dominating force in Roy's show business life has been his admiration for legendary crooner Bing Crosby. Roy has featured the songs made famous by Bing over the years. He met Bing at Belle Vue in 1977, just three weeks before Crosby's death. "Bing was performing at the King's Hall in what turned out to be his penultimate appearance. He told me he had heard of my interpretation of his songs and added: 'Keep up the good work'. That was a great thrill for me."

In 1980 Roy was asked by the Bing Crosby Historical Society to sing at a memorial concert in Bing's birthplace, Tacoma, Washington. "Rosemary Clooney was to be the star attraction but she was unable to appear and I took her place. Then a year later I was invited by the fan club to sing at the unveiling of a statue at his alma mater, Gonzaga University, in Spokane, Washington, where the Crosby family lived during his childhood.

"I sang a medley of Bing's songs before an audience that included his widow Kathryn and his sister Mary Rose. Later on, the fan club produced a vinyl record with Bing singing on one side and me on the other,

"There are not many speedway riders who can say they have been paired with one of the world's greatest singing stars."

Philip Dalling

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.

100 YEARS AGO

In April 1915, Harry Crosby (aged 11) was still in the seventh grade at Webster Grade School in East Sharp Avenue, Spokane.

75 YEARS AGO

Bing had completed filming *If I Had My Way* in April 1940 and on April 12, he recorded four songs from the film with John Scott Trotter and his Orchestra in Hollywood. The British magazine *The Gramophone* liked them!

> I should say that Bing Crosby has never made better records than these of "Meet the Sun Half Way," "The Pessimistic Character," "I Haven't Time to Be a Millionaire," and "April Played the Fiddle" on Bruns. 03031/2.
> *(The Gramophone*, October 1940)

"April Played the Fiddle" enjoyed seven weeks in the USA Billboard charts, peaking at No. 10. "Meet the Sun Half Way" reached the No. 15 mark during 4 weeks in

the lists.

The film itself had its New York premiere at the Rivoli Theater early in May but the critics were not impressed.

> Bing Crosby will likely want to forget this cinematic adventure just as quickly as possible. Way below par as compared with his releases for both Universal and Paramount during the past two years, *If I Had My Way* will need all of his draw strength to get it through the key runs for nominal grosses.
>
> Crosby works hard all through assisted materially by little Gloria Jean and El Brendel, but the trio cannot carry the burden of static direction and a boresome story that never catches on. Neither can a finale, in which many oldtime names of the legit and vaudeville appear briefly in a night club sequence, generate more than a ho-hum audience attitude…
>
> (*Variety*, May 1, 1940)

Bing with Gloria Jean in *If I Had My Way.*

From May 6 until July, Bing filmed *Rhythm on the River* (the original title was *Ghost Music*) with Mary Martin, Basil Rathbone, Wingy Manone, and Oscar Levant. Harry Barris also had a small part. The director was Victor Schertzinger and the musical director was Victor Young with orchestrations done by John Scott Trotter.

Despite his filming commitments, the Groaner was continuing to host the weekly *Kraft Music Hall* show on radio. Bing's guests during the 4-month period until the end of July included a wide diversity of stars such as Donald Budge, Lucille Ball, Oscar Levant, Olivia De Havilland, Alan Hale, Donald Crisp, Anna Neagle, Ralph Bellamy, Basil Rathbone. Jose Iturbi, William Boyd, Dave Butler, Gloria Jean, Frank McHugh, Robert Preston, John Payne, Johnny Mercer, Nigel Bruce, John Garfield, Eddie Albert, Shirley Ross and Raymond Massey.

He also managed to fit in many recording sessions resulting in songs like "Trade Winds" entering the charts on September 7 and topping the hit parade for four weeks during a 17-week stay. Bing recorded the songs from *Rhythm on the River* in July and one of these - "Only Forever" - reached the hit parade on September 28 and stayed there for 20 weeks with nine weeks in the No. 1 spot. On July 6, Mr. Crosby recorded "The Ballad for Americans" with Victor Young and his Orchestra and the Ken Darby Singers.

> Bing did not approach the project lightly. He studied the work before the session, and his concentration in the studio was painstaking; everything had to be right. In contrast to his usual speed (five tunes in two hours, rarely more than two takes), he devoted an hour to each of the four segments. If the reviews were not overtly political, political righteousness fueled the cheers of latecomers to the world of popular music. "Bing Crosby came of age, musically speaking, in his last week's album, *Ballad for Americans,"* wrote *New York Post* critic Michael Levin. 'This is the finest recorded performance Bing had done to date and shows that in the last few years he has gone beyond binging and has really learned how to sing." When he finished patronizing Bing, Levin chanced a risky comparison with Paul Robeson's Victor set that undoubtedly gladdened the hearts of Kapp's team: "For all of Robeson's magnificent voice, we prefer the Crosby version. The recording is better, the orchestration is better, and the chorus is better trained."
>
> (Gary Giddins, *Bing Crosby, A Pocketful of Dreams, The Early Years, 1903-1940*, page 554)

50 YEARS AGO

Bing returned to his home in Hillsborough on April 29, 1965 after a long stay at Las Cruces in Baja California and had his hair cut at Hilton's barber shop. He found time in the coming weeks to have his portrait painted by Barnaby Conrad before returning to Las Cruces again. It was June 13 when he arrived back in Hillsborough and the following day, Kathryn flew to Indianapolis to take the lead in a production of *Peter Pan.*

On June 25, Bing landed at Shannon Airport in Ireland with Max Bell, part owner of a racehorse called Meadow Court which was to run in the Irish Sweeps Derby the next day. Bing also had a one-third share in the horse as did Frank McMahon. So it was that on June 26, at the Curragh in Kildare, Bing saw Meadow Court win the Irish Sweeps Derby and pick up the first prize of £55,650. The jockey was Lester Piggott. After the race, Bing sang briefly to the large crowd.

The next day, Bing flew to London and that night he appeared live on the Eamonn Andrews television show on the Independent Television Network with Spike Milligan, Cilla Black, Patrick Campbell, and Harry H. Corbett. He spent the next few days at Wimbledon seeing the Centre Court tennis matches and he also was

interviewed for BBC2-TV by Joan Bakewell. The BBC had purchased some of Bing's sitcom series and he was able to plug the shows.

Bing with Meadow Court and Lester Piggott after the race.

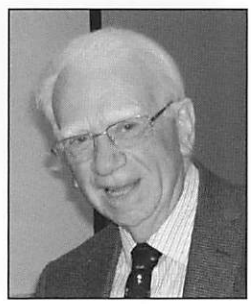
Returning to Hollywood on July 6, Bing began filming *Stagecoach* for Twentieth Century-Fox, his last major film, with Ann-Margret, Alex Cord, Van Heflin, Robert Cummings, and Red Buttons. The director was Gordon Douglas.

> Hollywood: July 8th.
> Bing, whom we have known for years, has had to be briefed about our undercover roles. He has promised to say nothing. So far, he has been very gay and light-hearted on the set. He sings a lot and he dances little time steps when he finishes a scene and he is unfailingly courteous to everyone. He manages to remain detached, though, and you just don't walk up to Bing to have a random chat about nothing. Also he has been in constant pain with bursitis in his shoulder and had to leave the set for an hour this morning to get to his doctor. We broke for lunch and made the long trek to the commissary. Just ahead of us, Brett Pearson, the "heavy" who is killed by a dagger, was walking with the bloody knife still jutting from his side.
>
> (From a report by Muriel Davidson and Janet Rale, published in the Saturday Evening Post, April 9, 1966)

On July 10, Bing traveled to the Hampshire House Hotel, Denver, Colorado, for the filming of scenes at a location some fifty-six miles northwest of the city. The weather was poor. Son Harry stayed with Bing. Within days, Bing and Harry moved into the Harvest House in Boulder, Colorado, to be nearer the location. The rest of the cast moved to Boulder as well. It was still raining and eventually the bad weather halted filming giving Bing the chance to fly to New York to see his ailing brother Everett. Bing and his son Harry flew into Chicago to join Kathryn on July 24 and the family went to see the Pittsburgh Pirates play the Chicago Cubs. Bing and the children also saw Kathryn in the dress rehearsal of *Arms and the Man* at the Drury Lane Theater. Bing then returned to Colorado, taking Mary Frances with him and leaving Harry with his mother.

KEEPING TRACK

Richard Baker looks at the new releases



COMPACT DISCS

After the avalanche of the last little while, we have a bit of a dearth this time around. But to fill it we have a prize exhibit, in the form of the following -

Bing Crosby -Kraft Music Hall Selected Performances 1935, 1936 JSP Records JSP6701

Price around £11 (UK) around $15 (US) but available to members through usual ICC channels while stocks last (and I understand they are rapidly depleting)

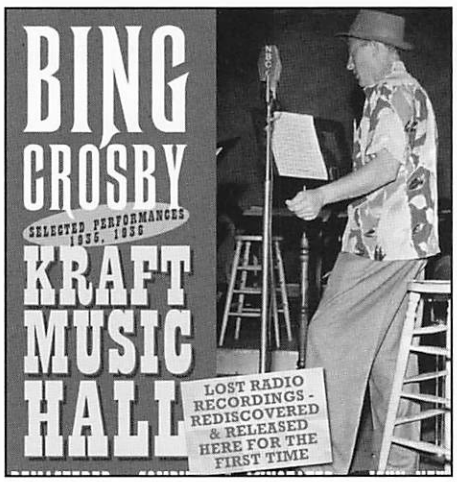
Dates shown are Kraft Music Hall broadcast dates.

5th December 1935 -1. Paul Whiteman introduction and hand-over to Bing / 2. Medley: (Please -Learn to Croon - June in January -From the Top of Your Head) / 3. On Treasure Island / 4. Red Sails in the Sunset / *12th December 1935* -5. Medley: (Thanks - Temptation - Love in Bloom - I Wish I Were Aladdin) / 6. Here's to Romance / 7. After You've Gone / 8. Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle / *19th December 1935* -9. Medley: (I Kiss Your Hand, Madame - I'm Yours -I Surrender Dear - From Monday On) 10. Alone / 11. Dinah / 12. Red Sails in the Sunset / *26th December 1935* -13. Anything Goes Medley: Sailor Beware / 14. I Get a Kick Out of You [Kay Weber] / 15. Anything Goes [Dorsey Trio] /16. Moonburn /17. My Heart and I /18. Thanks a Million / 19. You Are My Lucky Star / *2nd January 1936* -20. Eeny-Meeny-Miney-Mo / 21. I'll See You in My Dreams / 22. Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle / *9th January 1936* -23. A Little Bit Independent / 24. Some of These Days / 25. I Found a Dream / 26. With All My Heart

"Kraft Music Hall" commenced in 1933 and by 1935 was well established with Paul Whiteman as host. The

first four shows with Bing from December 5th 1935 were still hosted by Whiteman with strong participation by Bing who took sole charge from 2nd January 1936. John Newton writes the story of his acquisition of the original discs from which these performances are drawn on pages 11 to 15 of BING #167, summer 2014, and he includes images of a couple of the centre labels.

On this disc we have all of the songs sung by Bing in the four shows with Whiteman and the two immediately following which he hosted alone. As a result we have the earliest example of a contiguous sequence of radio shows. There are isolated examples of Bing's earlier radio work on the "Cremo" and "Woodbury" shows, but they represent nothing like the lengthy sequence which we have here. (I should mention that the CD "Bing Crosby and the Kraft Music Hall - Rare Original Survivors" of 2011 includes identical tracks 1-3 and a similar version of track 4 "Red Sails In The Sunset" though in part it differs from the "Rare Original Survivors" version because it was "reconstructed" on the earlier CD.)



John Newton reveals that he has records covering the complete shows of 2nd and 9th January 1936 and I have seen comment on the desirability of having these complete broadcasts issued. That begs the question of space but there is also a matter of content. The shows included such items as juggling and tap dancing (on radio, remember!). I feel sure that the decision to include all Bing's songs and some of his introductory material but only a couple of "guest" items (14 and 15) as a sample of the show as a whole, was correct.

The CD is interesting and instructive because of the illustration it gives of Bing at this important stage in his career and his increasing assurance. His approach to the songs is relaxed and the introductions are fluent and confident with several light and jocular touches. KMH was by no means his first break into radio but he had earlier been constrained by formal introductions and limited to singing with others handling introductions. It is often said that much of the radio material is more entertaining than the studio recordings and here are examples of Bing presenting songs which had been fairly recently recorded but here we have them with Bing's own linking material complete with several "throwaway" lines that became something of a trademark. His introduction to "Dinah" for example is well thought out but delivered in casual (but confident) way, and I like other small but telling examples of Bing as the master of radio that he became. "Coast to coast - and vice versa". Beautiful - and typical Bing!

There is another example of a later practice -a song adapted to specific circumstances-"Thanks a Million" becomes a "thank you" to Paul Whiteman.

In voice, Bing still has the higher pitch and slight huskiness of his younger years. Several of the songs included were current at the time in terms of Bing's own recordings and the medleys were from some of his films. All together a delight on several different levels and the CD joins the select group on my shelf for quick access. Do I find anything negative It would have been nice to have something more from John Newton about the discovery of his discs - but ICC members can refer to BING #167 mentioned above. I realise that costs might be affected by such extras but it ought to have been possible for those who made important contributions to be credited. They are our old friend Geoff Milne (who did the editing and balancing) and Peter Rynston (who got rid of bumps, scratches, crackle and such like external noises). Between them they did a superb job and the result is very acceptable for radio material of the era. There is a "stutter" on "Alone" but to cut it out would have meant omission of a whole phrase.

AFRS Basic Music Library Kipepeo Publishing

Price $12.99 as "recorded to order" CD-R from Amazon (US).

This shares the title of the two CD issues from "Sounds of Yesteryear" covered in BING #166. Do not be confused. The current version covers AFRS packs 451 and 452. The second "Sounds of Yesteryear" CD included pack 452. (The packs referred to are the records sent to US forces stations in packs of five, not to be confused with AFRS radio shows).

The current CD-R is really short measure at 25 minutes. If the producers have correctly identified the pack (the tracks are not individually listed on the Amazon site) they should be "Where the Blue of the Night", "Cuddle up a Little Closer", "If You Please", "Poinciana", "Wonderful One", and "Paper Doll", all taken from KMH from 1943. David Currington is engaged on research into the AFRS tracks and states that all the tracks appear to be taken from rehearsals and are unique.

However the same items in reasonably good quality are available on the internet and those who are interested would do well to examine the Internet Archive website here http://tinyurl.com/pz8rwgw *where there is a fair amount of AFRS content. You'll have to browse around. Tracks can be both streamed and downloaded. The tracks from #451 are at https://archive.org/details/AFRS-22.*

GI Journal with Bing Crosby (AFRS) Kipepeo Publishing
Price $12.99 as "recorded to order" CD-R from Amazon (US).
Again a very short disc of 30 minutes, but at least one that has wholly different content, comprising G. I. Journal of October 9, 1943, (program #12). The Crosby tracks should include "Thank Your Lucky Stars", "Poinciana" "The Vict'ry Polka" and "Daisy Bell", but again the Amazon site does not list them and the publisher's own website does not show the disc at all.

DVD and BLU-RAY

The Road To Hong Kong -Olive Films -Blu-ray around $20 (US) (DVD version around $18) (Prices covering a wide range up to £28:50 seen for UK based vendors)
Region A/1 Aspect ratio: 16:9 - 1.66:1

Robin and the 7 Hoods - Warner Home Video - Blu-ray around $15 (US) £15 (UK)
Region A/1 Aspect ratio 16:9 - 1.77:1

I mentioned the forthcoming release of these Blu-ray versions in BING #169. I have now had favourable reports on both, with the emphasis, of course (given the format) on the clear picture quality, with contrast and clarity being mentioned for both, though I would remind all that "The Road to Hong Kong" is black and white only. As yet there is no news of any region B/2 releases.

Format changes

In BING #169, under the above heading. I highlighted the moves into downloads and streaming. Very recently, as I write this, Apple have announced that they are entering the marketplace with their own streaming service, with the threat that they have a "Spotify killer", though quite what their unique offer that poses such a threat might be is as yet unclear to me. They are offering the option of a "family deal" with multiple users within a household able, legally, to stream different items simultaneously, but I suspect that many people already manage to share their access to existing streaming services. Apple are already a major player in the download market with iTunes, so presumably will be able to make it available for streaming fairly rapidly once they have cleared rights with the originators. However, almost from the outset they do seem to be having problems, as they wished participating music originators to allow them free access to material for an initial period of months. Many originators (the music labels) do not appear to be minded to play ball.

Richard Baker **bakerstonb@gmail.com**

Mary Crosby at The Curragh

In our *The Way We Were* section, we recorded how Bing's horse "Meadowcourt" won the Irish Sweeps Derby in 1965. This year saw the 150th running of the Irish Derby (now called the Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby) at The Curragh and it's also the 50th anniversary of Meadowcourt's victory. Mary Crosby was invited to attend and during her time in Ireland, she was interviewed on TV3 Ireland's A. M. programme on June 26. During a 9-minute chat, Mary talked about her role as Kristin Shepard in legendary television drama series, Dallas. She went on to speak very lovingly about her father and her childhood. The interviewer said that Bing was regarded as a Saint in Ireland and he asked Mary whether Bing was a strict father. Mary quickly dismissed this and implied that her mother was the one who was determined to deliver perfect children for Bing. Mary went on to say about her father, "He was a really good person…lots of things he did which were wonderful which he didn't talk about."

It was a very pleasant interview indeed and you can see it at:
http://www.tv3.ie/ireland_am_video.php?locID=1.65.74&video=95505

Announcement

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

50th (and final) ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

Weetwood Hall, Conference Centre & Hotel
Otley Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS16 5PS, UK
Telephone: 0113-230-6000
Website: www.weetwood.co.uk

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4th 2015, 2pm - 10pm

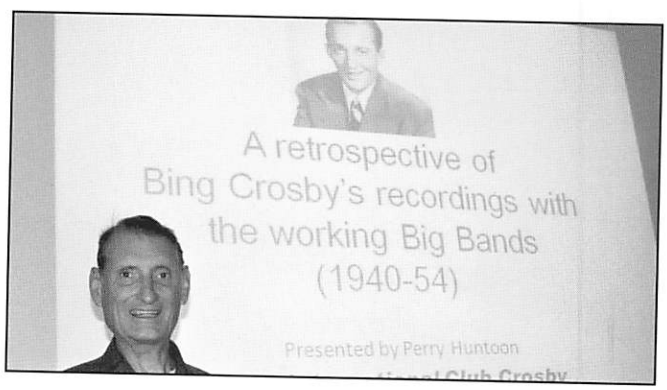
A cordial and warm invitation is extended to all members, their partners and friends to attend our forthcoming dinner meeting. This is the 50th (and final) annual gathering held in Leeds to celebrate Bing's life and times, and as usual, we shall have some interesting DVD material for you to see, using the excellent facilities at Weetwood Hall available for this purpose. You will hear Bing's last ever message to the ICC and we'll have many photographic memories of past Leeds meetings. Perry Huntoon will be continuing his look at Bing's female duet partners and some of the highlights from the material sent over in recent years by Greg Van Beek will be seen. The evening will finish with a 2-hour presentation of Bing's greatest movie moments as suggested by ICC members. There may be some special guests too.

We have kept the official start time at 2 p.m. to enable us to pack more into the time we have but apart from this, some of Bing's classic songs from the 1930s and '40s will be playing from 1 p.m. onwards as part of a PowerPoint presentation of Bing photos which will be a background as people arrive. This is well worth seeing too.

A three-course Carvery Dinner will be provided. Please book by sending a cheque for £24.50 per person to Michael Crampton. Y'all Come for the Last Round-Up! You will be amongst friends.

Special bed and breakfast prices have been agreed for ICC visitors wishing to stay overnight at Weetwood Hall. The hotel's web site indicates that the hotel is fully booked but a limited number of rooms have been put aside for ICC members so please telephone 0113-230-6000 to book your room and mention that you are attending the International Club Crosby gathering.

We'll have a get-together meal on the Saturday night with whoever is there.



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